

PURSuing GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, ESPECIALLY PROPHECY:  
COMBINING LOCAL CHURCH MOVEMENT AND  
CHARISMATIC PRACTICES TO PROPHECY

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **PURSuing GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, ESPECIALLY PROPHECY: COMBINING LOCAL CHURCH MOVEMENT AND CHARISMATIC PRACTICES TO PROPHECY**

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The context for this project was a home Bible study in Clarksville, Maryland, USA. Members of the Local Church Movement and other Evangelical denominations do not practice foretelling prophecy according to 1 Corinthians 12–14. If believers were taught how to hear God’s voice using methods observed in Charismatic gatherings, they would become equipped to hear God’s voice and increase in foretelling prophecy. The duration of this project was six weeks. Data was collected through pre– and post–interview questions, surveys, and group feedback. Participants demonstrated a tangible increase in foretelling prophesying after the training.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I never dreamt of pursuing another degree, especially a terminal degree in ministry and theology. I discarded all my textbooks after I completed a master's program in communications in 2004. I said I would never go back to school again. To my own surprise, I was wrong. I spent the first thirteen years of my Christian life in the Local Church Movement (LCM). Most of this time I spent studying the Bible. In the last few of those years, I prayed to gain an experience of being baptized in the Holy Spirit and for my wife to conceive. These desires culminated in a journey with the Lord that led me to receive training in the gifts of the Holy Spirit through Global Awakening (GA) and a formal theology degree at United Theological Seminary (UTS).

When I was unsure about embarking on this journey, God spoke to my heart and encouraged me through faculty staff members at UTS and through other prophetic people. It was during one of GA's events that I saw a UTS booth presenting a joint program between GA and UTS called Randy Clark Scholars. I was drawn to the booth, and I felt that God wanted me to do this degree. Before I could start, however, I had to complete a predoctoral program, since I did not already have a Master of Divinity. I recall that when I applied for this, I was required to verify my transcripts from China. I felt this was unnecessary since I completed my masters in the United States. Nonetheless, I prayed to God that both my verification would be waived, and a scholarship would be granted to me as a sign that God wanted me to do this degree.

I am thankful to sister Yoon Sun Shin from the UTS admissions office for helping me get everything in order. Eventually, the two things I prayed for happened. I started the predoctoral program in 2017 followed by the Doctoral of Ministry program in 2019. In the middle of this process, it became extremely difficult to continue because of limitations with my academic and English language skills. I wanted to quit. When I prayed to quit, the Lord sent sister Yoon again. She called me and began to encourage me to continue my journey and get registered. She may not even realize this, but God used her to encourage me at the right time. Around the same time, a sister from Nigeria prophesied to me that God wanted me to continue this degree to open future ministry doors. I registered last minute for that upcoming semester.

During my time at UTS, I also worked a job. During my lunch breaks, I maintained doing prayer walks in the Washington DC area where I worked. For a while, I prayed for help with my writing. God heard my prayer and moved the heart of a UTS graduate, Danielle Pagnanella, to help me with editing. My final acknowledgement is a salute to Randy Clark, Tom Jones, Ian Dunn, and all UTS faculty members for their help throughout my journey. My sincere thanks to the many other persons who supported me. I could not have arrived here without your help.

## **DEDICATION**

I wish to give thanks to the ministries of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, and the churches and believers in the Local Church Movement. I do not think I would have survived in the USA nor have come to this point in my spiritual maturity without their teaching in my earlier years. I also want to give thanks to the numerous ministries and believers in Charismatic circles. My wife and I would not have received our miracle baby without their help. Their encouragement has been foundational for me. I also want to give thanks to my wife for her support, and to my baby who helps me daily see that God is faithful. Finally, I dedicate this project to all the participants in my study who supported me and my spiritual endeavors in the last few years.



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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

AP	Apostolic–Prophetic Movement
GA	Global Awakening
IHOP	International House of Prayer
KCF	Kansas City Fellowship
LCM	Local Church Movement
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
PB	Plymouth Brethren
PSRP	Pray reading, Study, Recite and Prophesy
TCM	Traditional Chinese Medicine

If God leads you to walk a way that you know, it will not benefit you as much as if He would lead you to take the way that you do not know. This forces you to have hundreds and thousands of conversations with Him, resulting in a journey that is an everlasting memorial between you and Him.

—Watchman Nee, *Twelve Baskets Full* (2)

## INTRODUCTION

In 1 Corinthians 12–14, Paul’s model for prophesying includes edifying and building up the congregation of believers. It is also meant to reveal mysteries and secrets of unbelievers’ hearts so that all may come to a greater knowledge of Jesus Christ and a more intimate relationship with him and one another. Practicing prophecy this way should result in growth in one’s spiritual life and create a healthy sense of unity among the body of Christ. Through a biblical and comprehensive way of practicing the gift of prophecy, the church can become “built up” as Paul wrote in his letter to the Corinthians.

The theme of this project was to teach Christians of different denominations how to prophesy according to the biblical model of 1 Corinthians 12–14. My initial intention for this project aimed at combining the teachings of an Evangelical denomination (LCM) with those of Pentecostal and Charismatic practices to teach a full biblical model of living the Christian life as one of holiness and power. Due to time constraints, the project focused mainly on measuring a believer’s growth in the charismatic gifts, primarily prophecy, as related to training and practice in hearing God and discerning God’s voice through the Holy Spirit.

Prophesying within the LCM denomination (Evangelical) is referred to as PSRP (Pray reading, Study, Recite, and Prophecy). Pray reading is an abbreviated form of meditation on the Word of God. Study and Recite imply focused attention and memorization of biblical passages and other spiritual truths in order to release a message

to a group of people. LCM members prophesy in the form of forthtelling in church gatherings. This includes encouraging one another and building up the body of Christ in large gatherings, but it does not include foretelling. Members who practice this model in the LCM may not get supernatural revelations as prophetic people do in Pentecostal and Charismatic gatherings, but they often get inspiration from the Word of God and fresh application of the Word to real-life situations of believers.

In my small groups, some have already benefitted from being exposed to the fuller definition of prophecy that Paul outlines. I have witnessed these persons receive a baptism in the Holy Spirit. Upon receiving, they were activated in some of the gifts of the Holy Spirit including speaking in tongues and prophesying. These people started to have more encounters with God in a supernatural way, often in the form of dreams and visions. By receiving a complete biblical teaching on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, of a subsequential baptism in the Spirit, and training in how to hear God's voice, Christians, like those in my former home groups, could tap into divine aspects of the spiritual world with greater sensitivity and become more apt to produce foretelling prophecy like that which is common in Pentecostal and Charismatic gatherings.

To execute this project, I merged my former understanding and practice of forthtelling prophecy from the LCM with the form of prophesying (foretelling) that I learned from leaders within the Charismatic circles I was exposed to. A group of believers from divergent backgrounds, including former and current members of the LCM, were recruited to participate. Everyone was taught how to prophesy according to the model outlined by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12–14. My hypothesis is if believers in the LCM and other Evangelical churches are taught how to hear God's voice using the

biblical training and doctrine used in Charismatic congregations then these believers will be better equipped to hear God's voice and increase in their ability to prophesy in a foretelling manner.

The first chapter focused on sharing my personal experiences with prophecy and the gifts of the Holy Spirit in both an Evangelical church and several Charismatic groups and ministries. The second chapter serves as a biblical foundation explaining the function of the gifts and prophecy. In this part of the project, several Scriptures within 1 Corinthians 12–14 were explicated and examined in their original biblical language to show what prophecy is and make a case that Paul intended to say the gifts are to be pursued and used until Christ's second return. The third chapter discusses the story of the leader of the Plymouth Brethren movement, John Nelson Darby. He greatly impacted the LCM's development and played a part in diminishing early Pentecostal manifestations of the Holy Spirit among his movement.

The fourth chapter serves as a theological foundation explaining how the prophetic gift is meant to work and how it is successfully used in Pentecostal and Charismatic gatherings. The fifth chapter explains the educational concept of unlearning. It is important for individuals and communities, including the church, to unlearn faulty constructs or beliefs to receive new knowledge or revelation. This concept is applied to one's spiritual growth in the gifts of the Holy Spirit in this chapter. In the final and sixth chapter, the details of the process of testing, content, and results were analyzed and are shared. My subjects demonstrate substantial increases in hearing God's voice and their ability to foretell prophesy after six weeks of trainings based on the biblical model practiced in Pentecostal and Charismatic gatherings.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **MINISTRY FOCUS**

#### **Introduction**

The literal interpretation of 1 Corinthians 13:8–10 has shaped the general attitude toward prophecy in many modern Evangelical churches. Verses 8–10 state,

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end.<sup>1</sup>

Those who deny modern-day prophets or that prophetic gifts exist today, argue that “when the complete comes” refers to the canonization of the Bible. That is, giving and receiving revelation like that which occurs when someone prophesies, came to an end after the Bible was written and compiled. Those who adhere to this belief are called Cessationists. Dr. John F. MacArthur, a Calvinist pastor and teacher, is one of the leading voices today in support of cessationism. MacArthur supports his view by commenting on what he believes is the conclusion many scholars have reached regarding the meaning of “perfect.” He states, “Significantly, though these scholars disagree on the identification of

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<sup>1</sup> *Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Pub., 2004). Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible references in this paper are from the NRSV.

the “perfect,” they all reach the same conclusion—namely, that the miraculous and revelatory gifts have ceased.”<sup>2</sup>

On the contrary, there are others who claim that prophets exist today. In fact, in many Pentecostal and Charismatic groups prophets speak to congregants and prophecy is given in the church or group setting. I was not brought up spiritually in either of these denominations. Rather, I was spiritually educated in the Local Church Movement (LCM) associated with Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. In this denomination, the leaders do not recognize the kind of foretelling prophecy like that which is practiced in Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. They do advocate a form of prophecy though. The LCM practices a unique form of “prophesying.” They practice what is called *forthtelling* prophecy. Charismatics understand prophecy to include *foretelling*.

Nee and Lee’s form of prophecy is supported by the interpretation of two scriptures: (1) “Those who speak in a tongue build up themselves, but those who prophesy build up the church” (1 Cor. 14:4) and (2) “For you can all prophesy one by one” (1 Cor. 14:31). The LCM rejected “speaking in tongues,” since Scripture suggests “those who speak in a tongue build up themselves.” They believed and encouraged everyone to prophesy to build up the church rather than self, just as the second part of the verse states. The LCM uses the acronym “PSRP” (Pray reading, Study, Recite and Prophecy) to teach their members how to effectively prophesy.

While many believers were positively impacted by the LCM’s style of prophecy, their understanding and practice of prophecy is not a complete biblical picture of

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<sup>2</sup> John F. MacArthur, *Strange Fire: The Danger of Offending the Holy Spirit with Counterfeit Worship* (Nashville, TN: Nelson Books, 2013), 148.



prophecy because they overlook the aspect of “foretelling.” They also do not promote the baptism or gifts of the Holy Spirit. I learned many things about prophesying from the LCM that helped me grow in my spiritual life, but I also learned a lot from several Charismatic leaders how to connect to the supernatural realm through the gift of prophecy. Leading a disciplined and biblically knowledgeable life are essential practices of a Christian lifestyle just as are foretelling prophecy and moving in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. My experiences demonstrate that there exist many genuine prophets and Holy Spirit-inspired prophecies among persons of the modern-day Charismatic prophetic movement.

However, caution may be given to both kinds of churches—LCM and Charismatic groups—so as not to become false prophets but neither neglect the gift of prophecy that is still alive today. Among those with a genuine prophetic gift, some may lack a strong basis of biblical knowledge and discipline which could help them understand more of the Word of God systematically. Conversely, among LCM churches, they have diminished the flame of the Holy Spirit by not embracing the full biblical meaning of prophesying. In other words, both parties need each other to complement the practice of prophesying according to a biblical model.

The Lord showed me in a prophetic dream that these two rivers outlined above (denominations/groups) would converge, and a new movement would begin. Combining these two ways of prophesying will bring a convergence of holiness with power. In other words, it will merge both the Word with Spirit to usher in a new age in church growth while also bring revival to China and the rest of the world.

This chapter will discuss my firsthand experiences with prophecy in both LCM and modern-day prophetic gatherings. The context of the LCM church and my involvement with them will be outlined. My journey into Pentecostal and Charismatic congregations will also be shared. A synergy of the context and my experiences formed the basis for this project. That is, the project was developed under the assumption that prophecy and the gifts of the Spirit are necessary components for ushering in revival to the body of Christ, to Chinese congregants in my context, and ultimately to the nation of China.

## **Context**

### *The Local Church Movement*

The Local Church Movement began with Watchman Nee in the 1920s in China. It was one of the most controversial Christian movements in modern Chinese church history. Some consider it to be the only denomination that originated from China and spread all over the world. Though its numbers of congregants are still minor compared to many mainline churches, it may be the only denomination that spread outside of China that has a relatively large number of believers who are not Chinese. Watchman Nee's writings also influenced many denominations in the West and other parts of the world.

In later years, Nee's coworker, Witness Lee, established more Local Churches in Taiwan and in the United States. Local Churches spread to many other parts of the world. In 1952, Watchman Nee was put in prison and later sent to a labor camp until he died in 1972. Watchman Nee allegedly entrusted the leadership of the LCM to Witness Lee.

However, some coworkers of Watchman Nee did not agree with Witness Lee and, therefore, accused him of teaching heresy. This accusation was further exacerbated when many other allegations regarding the LCM were published in the West in the 1970s.

These publications included the infamous books, *The Mindbenders* and *The God-Men*.

In these books, the authors defamed the LCM by accusing its members of several things. Aside from being labeled one of the most dangerous cults in America, it was also charged with engaging in “deceptive, coercive, and destructive practices.”<sup>3</sup> Other accusations included brainwashing, mind–bending, and fear tactics to keep members. The *Defense and Confirmation Project* of 2017 stated,

The first edition of *The God-Men* [italics mine], written and self-published by the Spiritual Counterfeits Project (SCP), contained gross misrepresentations of the teaching of Witness Lee concerning such things as biblical authority and morality. It also sought to associate Witness Lee and the Local Churches with mental manipulation and Eastern mystical practices.<sup>4</sup>

The Local Church responded by filing lawsuits against them. The Local Church won the lawsuits. In this wave of criticism, the Christian Research Institute in the United States also published an article claiming that the LCM taught heresy in the 1970s.

In China, people still saw Western and American Christianity as the authority in terms of judging whether a group was heretical or not. As a result of this article and other books originating in the West, the Chinese authorities, despite the court ruling, considered this group heretical and cracked down on some of their meetings. Many Chinese believers in this movement suffered severe persecution in the 1980s. This

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<sup>3</sup> “Contending for the Faith,” Defense & Confirmation Project, last modified 2017, <https://contendingforthefaith.org/en/the-mindbenders-history/>.

<sup>4</sup> “Contending for the Faith,” Defense & Confirmation Project.

experience also had damaging effects on the believers who lived in the United States. In early 2000, Christian Research Journal, led by Hank Hanegraaff, held an investigation on the Local Church Movement. They issued a special publication titled, “We Were Wrong,” as a way of apologizing for their careless article in the 1970s. They accepted the LCM as a genuine Christian movement henceforth.<sup>5</sup> Many other Christian organizations like Fuller Theological Institute also issued similar statements declaring the LCM a genuine Christian group.<sup>6</sup>

Even though apologies surfaced, it seemed the damage had been done and many Chinese Christians did not care to reconsider the LCM in a positive light. Many people today still hold a critical view against the LCM. American and other Western churches showed diminished interest in the LCM because it did not keep momentum in growth in the United States in the 1970s. Even if the LCM is a genuine Christian movement comprised of genuine believers, some of their teachings and practices are indeed controversial.

Although practices of this group may be controversial, there are some positive things that can be highlighted. Rick Joyner, a well-known American prophet, comments in one of his blogs on prophecy that he considers it important to learn from the

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<sup>5</sup> Elliot Miller, “We Were Wrong: A Reassessment of the ‘Local Church’ Movement of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee,” in “The Local Church,” ed. Hank Hanegraaff, special issue, *Christian Research Institute* 32, no. 6 (2009): 2-52, <http://www.equip.org/PDF/EnglishOpt.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Fuller Theological Seminary, “An Open Letter from the Local Churches and Living Stream Ministry Concerning the Teachings of Witness Lee,” DCP & Living Stream Ministry, 2017, <https://an-open-letter.org/PDF/Fuller%20Theological%20Seminary%20Statement%20English.pdf>.

differences in others that exist within the body.<sup>7</sup> I imagine that if the Lord's leading and power were not behind a movement, it probably would not continue or spread. The LCM was the only movement that originated in China and spread to the West and the rest of the world. Based on this logic, I purport that God's Spirit did bless their movement and spread it. The question now is: What message did the Lord want to bring to the churches in the West and the rest of the world through the LCM?

### *Function and Practice of the Local Church Movement*

The Local Church Movement refers to itself as the Lord's Recovery. Members of the LCM believed their calling was to recover all the truths that were lost among many generations of the Church. Watchman Nee supposedly had a vast amount of knowledge from reading a lot of Christian literature throughout history and from reading the Bible hundreds of times. He gleaned a lot from different eras of Christianity. One reason members of the LCM believed their organization succeeded was due to the degradation of Western churches. Some may be offended with this idea, but there are many Christian leaders in the West who agree that there are problems in Western Christianity that prevent the Church from advancing in spiritual things.

Teachings and practices originating from the LCM have already impacted Western churches. For example, the Local Church Movement is supposedly the first to have started the model of cell groups or small groups, even as early as the 1940s under

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<sup>7</sup> Rick Joyner, "The Application of a Prophetic Word, Part 3- Prophetic in the Body of Christ," Rick Joyner's Word for the Week, April 26, 2011, <https://publications.morningstarministries.org/word-for-the-week/application-prophetic-word-part-3-prophetic-body-christ>.

the leadership of Watchman Nee. Witness Lee further developed these in Taiwan.<sup>8</sup> In following years, these cell groups were instituted by the famous Korean evangelist, David Yongggi Cho and they circulated in Korea after he started his church in 1958.<sup>9</sup> Eventually many Western churches also adopted this model. Nowadays, cell groups or small groups are common in almost every American church. There is no concrete evidence that the LCM was the first to start this practice, but it is possible since the LCM was a pioneer in practicing and promoting small groups to make up for the lack of intimacy in large church gatherings.

Other examples of how the LCM functioned are provided. The LCM strongly opposed the typical clergy system in Christendom. They removed the position of pastors because they believed every believer should function as a priest to God. Since there were no pastors in the meetings to preach the sermons, the meetings were open to every believer to speak or prophesy for the Lord. This was based on their understanding that “you can all prophesy one by one” (1 Cor. 14:31).

The LCM also placed a lot of emphasis on Ephesians 4:12 which says, “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.” To them, this meant the body should not be seeking personal gain, but instead seek to build up the church. They encouraged all to speak as a pastor or a professional speaker on behalf of the Lord to edify the congregation. The church developed many practical ways to help

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<sup>8</sup> Witness Lee, *The Living Needed for Building Up the Small Group Meetings* (Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministries, 1985), <https://www.ministrybooks.org/SearchMinBooksDsp.cfm?id=17EF0587D5C0>

<sup>9</sup> Daniel Silliman, “Died: David Yonggi Cho, Founder of the World’s Largest Megachurch,” *Christianity Today*, September 14, 2021, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2021/september/died-david-yonggi-cho-korea-megachurch-cell-church-growth.html>.

people commonly called lay members in mainline denominations, to speak the truth of God. LCM congregations also helped many lay members gain biblical knowledge and develop teaching gifts. These opportunities for growth may not be possible in a traditional church setting where only the designated members do most of the speaking.

The leaders in the LCM understood that unless all believers immersed themselves in the Word of God and spent time in prayer, one would hardly have anything to share that edifies the church. In the 1940s, an elder in a church in Shanghai Yu, Chenghua, under the leading of Watchman Nee, translated the book, *A Short and Easy Method of Prayer*, into Chinese. In this book, Madame Jeanne Guyon briefly explains how believers may enter the presence of God by praying the Word of God. Her book greatly influenced the Local Church Movement.<sup>10</sup> Witness Lee further developed Guyon's teaching and called it Pray reading. This practice was his most impressive practice in the LCM, as commented on by Hank Hanegraaff when he conducted his investigative research on the LCM in early 2000.<sup>11</sup>

Pray reading is the first of the four steps developed by the LCM to prepare believers for prophesying. The other steps of Study, Recite, and Prophecy form PSRP. In the LCM, prayer and meditation were given top priority. Pray reading is a unique practice similar to the Catholic church's practice of "Lectio Divina." In Protestant terminology, this refers to meditation. Pray reading actively combines both the written Word of God and prayer into one practice. It is a simple practice, and it is very easy to employ.

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<sup>10</sup> Madame Jeanne Guyon, *A Short and Easy Method of Prayer*, ed. J. Scott Husted (Online Self-Publishing Book Company: Lulu.com), 2011, [https://books.google.com/books?id=R7YAwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=R7YAwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false).

<sup>11</sup> "Contending for the Faith," Defense & Confirmation Project.

Members are encouraged to repeat a single verse or multiple phrases of a verse in prayer, either silently or loudly, for a determined amount of time. Believers are encouraged to speak louder than softer when reading.

The LCM believed that once a person opened their mouth to declare something loudly, it would help them move past the distractions in their mind and engage with their spirit-man more easily. Wesley Campbell, who is a prophet in the modern prophetic movement, teaches something similar. Wesley explains that once a person opens their mouth, their mind cannot effectively wander as it would when one is silent. He states, “When they grow silent, their minds wander, and by the time they realize it, they find themselves a million miles away from effective prayer.”<sup>12</sup> Pray reading performed out loud as a habitual practice helps members in the LCM enter the presence of God and receive spiritual revelation.

The LCM also practices calling on the name of the Lord. This can also be practiced both silently or loudly, though practicing it loudly or vocally was more encouraged to exercise the spirit-man. Paul teaches that there will be life and peace for the one who sets their mind on the Spirit; death for the mind set on the things of the flesh (Rom. 8:6). A lot of spiritual death in the modern church is due to believers setting their minds on things of the flesh. Teachings like calling on the name of the Lord and Pray reading were developed and promoted to help believers move beyond the thoughts in their minds and engage their spirit-man.

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<sup>12</sup> Wesley and Stacey Campbell, *Praying the Bible the Book of Prayers* (Bloomington, MN: Chosen Books, 2016), 21.



Christians sometimes claim they do not have time to read the Bible. If they do read it, they often scan through it quickly. It is very hard to absorb Scripture into one's spirit when little is masticated. Many Christians do not experience more spiritual growth even though they attend church every week and even read the Bible, and this is because they are not meditating on the Word. Members of the LCM encouraged believers to digest the Word of God like a cow digests its food. A cow first takes in the food into its stomach and then regurgitates it many times before fully digesting. In the process of regurgitation, the cow chews its food several times. In this way, the body receives more nutrients from the food.

A prophet of the Apostolic–Prophetic Movement (AP) named James Goll wrote a book called, *The Lost Art of Practicing His Presence*. In it, Goll describes the meditation of the Word of God as a lost art.<sup>13</sup> This seems especially true for many Protestants who abandoned teachings in Catholicism that embraced this practice. Although modern–day church leaders like Goll may think this practice was lost, the LCM maintained it and it was greatly endorsed and practiced among LCM churches.

The LCM understood the importance of filling one's spiritual car with fuel. Diligently studying and reciting the Bible and other spiritual books were greatly encouraged. These represent the next two practices of Study and Recite. LCM leaders believed that God created mental capability so that one could learn from others alongside receiving inspiration directly from God. They believed that if a person could not remember a quote or took a long time to find the right verse, this would impair one's

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<sup>13</sup> James Goll, *Practicing His Presence* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image), 2006, 135.

ability to become a good speaker and hinder the presentation of the gospel. Instead, if believers committed the Bible to memory like a pharmacist places and labels all their drugs in order, one could find what they need when the time comes. The LCM even conducted Bible reading competitions, and prizes were given to the winners. These prizes included free Bibles, spiritual books, and free airline tickets to join denominational conferences.

The last step of PSRP is Prophecy. This practice in the Local Church setting does not include foretelling. The modern-day prophetic movement recognizes foretelling as biblically prophesying, but they do not only attribute it to the prophets in the Bible. They believe laypeople can also participate in this kind of prophecy. The LCM does not recognize or promote modern-day prophets or prophetic gifts. Their understanding of prophesying is “speaking for God, speaking God forth, and ministering God and Christ into people.”<sup>14</sup>

The LCM believes that “speaking God forth” means no one should speak about trivial things. It rather means that one should spend time in prayer to receive revelation from God so that their speaking is indeed a revelation from God. The phrase “minister and dispense God and Christ to people” is measured against its effectiveness. A member, for example, cannot just say they spoke and therefore fulfilled their obligation to build up the church. They must measure their effect by seeing if the message edified other members.

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<sup>14</sup> Witness Lee, *The Practice of Prophesying* (Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministries, 1990), <https://www.ministrybooks.org/SearchMinBooksDsp.cfm?id=33E313DFCF>.

To assist in the practice of PSRP, a book called *Morning Revival* was compiled weekly to give members written material for Pray reading and spiritual reading. It also contained suggested Bible reading plans. Members are encouraged to have daily morning prayer time and study the material to prepare for their speaking on Sundays.

By using the PSRP model, many members in the LCM learned to speak eloquently and to encourage, edify, and build up other members and the church at large. This practice caused many members to mature spiritually because the Word of God was given space to transform their lives. Though, this was as far as prophecy went in the LCM. The LCM held caution and neglect toward foretelling prophecy. For my wife and I, this was a great disappointment because no one in the LCM was able to predict if we would one day have a child. This was a personal inquiry that I sought answers to after ten years of barrenness.

### **Ministry Journey**

#### *Personal Involvement with LCM*

I never planned to become involved with the Local Church Movement. I was born and raised in China to a family that worshiped Buddha. My father was an atheist, and my mother was a devout follower of Buddha. My great grandparents worshipped another local idol. Our house was built on a former Buddhist temple which was demolished during the Cultural Revolution. Reflecting on my early experiences, I now see that God spoke to my heart and led me on a journey to know Him even though I did not realize it at the time.

A Korean prophet confirmed this in 2017 when he told me that the Holy Spirit had been leading my steps onto a path to know Him. I believe this to be true. In high school, I started to sense that I had a calling on my life to do greater things beyond what I could imagine at that time. I started to prepare myself. The Holy Spirit spoke to my heart concerning which college to attend after I took the college entrance exam. He also placed a strong burden on my heart to study in the United States after graduating. When I failed to be accepted into a college graduate program, I understood it was the Lord closing the door to stay in China. This forced me to go on a journey to the United States but by first studying in England.

While I was in my first year of graduate study at London School of Economics, I had an encounter with God. The weight of the Lord came upon me convicting me of my need for Him, and I accepted salvation. With three hundred dollars in my pocket and a one-way ticket, I went to the United States for my second year of graduate study at the University of Southern California. I had no money to pay for tuition and no place to stay. After spending an entire day outside the registration office struggling with what to do, I decided it would be better to return to China. In desperation, I prayed, “God, I am such a sinner. Do you still remember me?”

Not too long after, I met a Chinese Christian on the street who was a member of The Church in Los Angeles. He invited me to stay at their facility called the Brother House. The Brother House was located near my school campus, and there I received practical help and spiritual training. All other contact I had with ministries during this time of my life were also with groups associated with the LCM, just as was this Brother House. According to Jesus, nothing happens if the heavenly Father does not permit it

(Matt. 10:29). I believe these occurrences were not a coincidence but a divine setup. God was leading me. Many other members of The Church also believed that God sent me to join them.

I was astonished by how this time of despair in my life turned around. While living at the Brother House, I saw God's favor. For the first year, they allowed me to stay there for free. Nobody ever asked me to pay rent. When I started to work a year later, I began to pay rent and gradually pay back what I gained via donations. A lovely Chinese Christian, affectionately called Grandpa Chen, led this on-campus group of brothers. The group operated in love, and people who opposed Witness Lee and his teachings were also members of this congregation. Even though I was aware of different opinions against the LCM, I was still willing to learn through this church what Watchman Nee and Witness Lee taught.

During the first two years of my Christian life, I was very lukewarm and often did not have much to say when it was my turn to prophesy in our congregation times. Sometimes I said nothing or something very shallow. In 2004, I had an encounter with the Lord. Jesus appeared to me during a conference through a personal vision and told me that He would come back once the body of Christ was built up. After this vision, I became enthusiastic in practicing the PSRP steps. I made them a habit in my life. One day after Pray reading a verse, I returned to work feeling as if I were walking down the stairs into a cloud. I realized I had entered the presence of God unknowingly by immersing myself in His Word and meditating on it.

I am thankful that God used my time in the LCM to develop my teaching gift and a prayer life. Although I enjoyed my time with the LCM, I came to understand that the

kind of prophecy taught in the modern prophetic movement is not an incorrect form of prophesying. It is biblical. In 2015, I became connected with churches outside the LCM. This is how I became aware of ministries like John Wimber's Vineyard Movement and Randy Clark's Global Awakening. Wimber's teaching on "do the stuff"<sup>15</sup> encouraged everyone to pray for the sick and do the stuff that Jesus taught. Randy Clark's "little ole me"<sup>16</sup> is another saying used to equip many to practice healing. Randy emphasizes that if God can use him, who is just a regular guy, God can use anyone. I began to believe that God wanted to use me in a greater way.

### *Validity of the Modern-Day Prophetic Movement*

By 2015, my wife and I had been married for ten years. Although we wanted a child, we were unable to have one. We started to think something might be wrong when we realized we were not getting pregnant without prevention. From 2010 to 2014, we attempted in vitro fertilization (IVF) five times. All our attempts failed. Our IVF journey ended when top medical professionals said that we would never be able to have a child naturally. During this time, we also tried Chinese herbal remedies, but they too failed. I felt completely hopeless. Even our egg donor bailed at the last minute.

I began to consider that the Lord may have another way of fixing our barrenness. I desired divine healing and prophetic words from the Lord about this. I decided to reach out to the older, more experienced believers in my denomination. They were loving and

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<sup>15</sup> ExplainEDtv, "Doing the Stuff explained by John Wimber" (YouTube video), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ctJMtsF0GvQ&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ctJMtsF0GvQ&feature=emb_logo).

<sup>16</sup> Randy Clark, *God Can Use Little OLE Me* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 1998), 34, Kindle.

caring toward my wife and I, but they did not have a vision or prophetic word from the Lord to give to us. Some members said that it was the Father's will for us, and we needed to accept it. Others said that it was God's wisdom for us to have more time to serve Him. We could not help but think it was either our sin or ancestral sins that prevented us from having children. With all their biblical knowledge, my church elders still could not prophetically nor supernaturally minister to us. They could not tell me when or if I would have children or if there was a reason I did not have them. I came to understand that they could not do this because they did not believe in these practices. I was desperate to hear what the Spirit of God was saying about my situation.

Like many other Evangelical churches, my wife and I had no interest or knowledge about the Pentecostal movement or AP during this time in our lives. We had general impressions or thoughts about Pentecostals such as, "speaking in tongues may be from the devil," "false prophecies," and "deceived by the evil spirits." Although these negative labels could have given us false impressions, our experiences eventually offered us a different perspective.

One preacher in our denomination commented that in his many years of "prophesying" in Local Church settings, he never saw what is described in 1 Corinthians 14:24–25 happening in the LCM. Verse 24 and 25 state, "But if all prophesy, an unbeliever or outsider who enters is reprov'd by all and called to account by all. After the secrets of the unbeliever's heart are disclosed, that person will bow down before God and worship him, declaring, 'God is really among you.'" This preacher was commenting on the fact that he had never seen people bow down during LCM meetings claiming that the Lord was truly among them because of a prophecy. I, on the other hand, did see this

happen when I later participated in prophetic meetings in Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. I came to realize this preacher's observation pointed to the reality that something was missing in the way the LCM prophesied.

In 2014, I made a vow to God that I would not stop praying until I received healing and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Lord had put a strong burden inside me to receive His baptism, but I was not sure how to receive it due to a lack of teaching and understanding. Therefore, I would go out every afternoon to a park to pray until I hit rock bottom in the later part of 2014. This was when the doctor gave us the final diagnosis of my wife's condition. I had lost all hope in modern medicine, and none of my prayers had produced the answer I was looking for.

This disappointment became a spiritual turning point in my life. I realized the way I prayed might be lacking something. As the Bible says, God's people went into captivity because they lacked knowledge (Isa. 5:13). I did not know how to receive healing, prophetic words, or the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but I gradually began leaving my denomination and turning to other churches for help. I started listening to teachings on healing and the baptism of the Holy Spirit on YouTube.

I began listening to healing evangelists such as Norvel Hayes, Kenneth E. Hagin, and Benny Hinn. Additionally, I gleaned knowledge from Andrew Wommack, Derek Prince, Reinhard Bonnke, and others. I learned from current healing evangelists, and I realized that many healing revivalists also existed in the past. I also started reading books about the Pentecostal movement and these opened my spiritual eyes. I came to understand that speaking in tongues releases the baptism of the Holy Spirit.



I attended as many healing services as I could. In October 2015, my wife and I went to New York for one of Benny Hinn's services. His ministry spent a substantial portion of the service asking for donations. There was also a supposed prophet who allegedly sensed and called out people's first names to keep encouraging the audience to give one thousand dollars to receive blessings. After the healing service ended, we were very disappointed. However, during the meeting Hinn called out a word of knowledge that a lady named Elizabeth was there and that God would give her a child. Although skeptical as a medical professional, my wife said to me that if her name were called out, she would believe all of it was true. Unfortunately, Hinn only called out a lady named Elizabeth. Even though my wife wished to leave the service, I persuaded her to stay until the end to receive prayer. When this did not result in anything miraculous, my wife further doubted these healing services. This was our first healing service in a Pentecostal church, and we had put so much hope in it.

Whether my wife believed it or not, I listened to many teachings from Kenneth E. Hagin and was convinced of his gift of healing. When I heard his son was having a meeting in New York, I also went there. I asked Hagin's son to pray that I would receive a healing anointing. He said it was up to God, but he still prayed that if God were willing, He would give me a healing anointing. In the evening, I had a dream where Jesus appeared to me and told me he already given me a healing anointing. I replied, "No, you had not." In the dream, Jesus asked me to raise my right hand. I raised my right hand and I felt burning. He asked me to raise my hand again and once again, my right hand burned. I understood that this gift of healing did not manifest in the day service, but in my dream that evening Jesus showed me that He had given it to me.

I returned from this trip telling my wife I had a healing anointing to pray for her. I started to pray for her every day. Unfortunately, my wife did not believe me. She told me she did not believe that I could heal even a mosquito. Soon enough, I came across a man named Randy Clark on YouTube. He said a man named James Maloney had the gift of healing and when he prayed, even metal in pacemakers dissolved.

I listened to James Maloney and was amazed by his prophetic gifts. When I learned that he was going to take a sabbatical for a year, I decided to fly to his last service. However, when I arrived, I discovered that James had sprained his ankle and did not show up for the meeting. I was so disappointed. One of his associates, who is also a graduate from Randy Clark's Supernatural School of Ministry, ministered in his place. I had brought an airplane pillow and asked him to pray over it to heal my wife. This did not seem to work. This man called out many words of knowledge, and one of them was related to nose congestion. I stepped out in faith to claim this healing for myself. It did not come true for me either.

Despite these failed attempts, something did happen at this meeting. For the first time, I felt a physical tingling sensation in my face. I was told by a lady who had a connection with Global Awakening that this was the Holy Spirit. When I went back to Maryland, I found a local church to join that was associated with them. While there, I felt an even stronger sense of tingling on my face during worship. I understood this was a confirmation that God wanted me to stay at this church. This is how I became more involved with Global Awakening.

During the trip to Kentucky, something else important happened. When I went to the altar to receive prayer from the pastor, I received my first prophetic word. The man said,

Brother, you will begin to flow. You are getting an understanding of this. You are going to pray for the sick. You have compassion and deep compassion for sickness and people that are hurting and have no hope. The Lord says, “I will raise you.” You are going to have a voice, and God says, “I am going to use you.”

I never dreamt that God would give me a ministry, especially because in the LCM we were not encouraged to have our own ministries. They taught us to carry out the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee to help spread the truths God gave to them. I did not know God had individual plans for my life. Even though the prophetic word sounded simple, my teacher, Kim Maas, from my prophetic class at Global Awakening, encouraged me by saying, “This is a powerful prophecy.” I started to wonder what my future would be like and what that word meant. I began to eagerly pursue the gift of prophecy. I attended more prophetic conferences, read books, and took prophetic certification classes at Global Awakening.

In October, I convinced my wife to join me for another trip to North Carolina to receive prayer from Mahesh Chavda. I had read an article that he once prophesied to a woman, and that woman conceived a year later.<sup>17</sup> He even jokingly said in his own preaching, “When Mahesh comes to town, every woman gets pregnant.” Before going, I emailed Chavda’s staff to say that we were coming. To our surprise, they treated us like VIPs. Not only did they reserve us a front-row seat, but one of their leaders also took the initiative to look for us. He arranged both a prophetic and a healing team to pray for us.

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<sup>17</sup> Stuart and Lynley Allan, *No Longer Barren but Fruitful* in “Spread the Fire,” (January 2007), in Canada’s Christian Library Online, <https://www.christianity.ca/page.aspx?pid=10596>.

This leader shared a vision with us of “two lines crossing together;” something like a convergence point. This man explained that the Lord led me to this place, and the vision represented an intersection or convergence point for my life. He said he strongly felt that the Lord was leading me in a different direction. The word made sense to me because I was secretly learning from Pentecostal churches but had not officially left my denomination. I experienced a lot of internal distress about leaving the LCM because many believers there helped me.

Another man with a prophetic gift told me he saw me with the gift of healing. He told me it was the Lord’s will for me to practice healing prayers on my wife, and that the Lord would heal my wife through my prayers. This was my exercise. He confirmed what I experienced in the meeting with Hagin. Another lady saw a vision of the Lord using a sword to cut off the dragon in my wife’s family line, removing the ancestral curses. Later, Andrew Canon White and Chavda prayed for us with anointing oil. The prophetic lady said she felt whatever needed to be taken care of in the spiritual realm had been completed, but that it often takes ten months to a year to manifest in the physical realm.

This trip blessed us, but we were still unsure if anything would change. When I came back from North Carolina, I joined my first Global Awakening conference, called Cultivate Revival, in Pennsylvania. By that time, I already experienced a breakthrough in speaking in tongues and I received the baptism of the Spirit to some degree. In this meeting, when two Global students prayed for me, the Holy Spirit fell on me as well as two of them, and none of us could stand. We backed up a dozen steps and fell on the chairs behind us. A student prophesied over me as I tried to support a woman receiving prayer while waiting for my turn. I watched her receive deliverance from a demon. It was

the first time I had seen anything like this. She kept coughing, and then the demon was gone. The student that prophesied over me said,

You are a warrior. You come from a lineage of warriors. The Lord wants you to take the authority that has been given to you while you are in this revival meeting because you are a very powerful man. When you came to pray for this young lady, you brought a force that enveloped her. I felt this, and I can even smell this and taste this. However, I don't know if you can tell what is happening. Man, God has this gift of healing for you, and this is going to come more and more, and become something you can have more confidence in because it is so strong on you. He is assigning this to you right now. Your hand is so mighty in healing and brings freedom and breaks off chains from people. It is all over you, man. He trusts you with His mysteries because you dare to stand before the throne of God and dispel the things that were spoken when you were a young lad. You have come to understand not only the kingdom of God. You have reached the throne of God. Now you have come here to receive the outpouring God has downloaded to you. It is so amazing. God wants to expand His territory in your soul. He is always there in your spirit. He wants you to begin to be there in the morning to see your territory because he is expanding it more. He wants you to feel His presence. He might come and stand beside you. He might stand behind you. He might stand to the side. But He wants you in that territory, so you look out and see the fact that even heavenly hosts come to your territory to find solace from the battle. Even the heavenly hosts come from heaven to your territory to get away from the battle. They come so they can receive the refreshment God has placed in your territory. I know it is deep, but this is what God is telling me. In you, He is providing a place where souls can come to find sanctuary from whatever is going on, to receive refreshment so they can regain strength and go to battle again. In your territory, He is expanding it and making you aware of more and more of this universe that is in you.

I was amazed by these words. I came from an Evangelical background where accusations about the prophetic movement led me to believe that such prophecies cater to our self or ego. In other words, these so-called prophecies make someone feel awesome about themselves but are from the soul or even of devilish deceit. They supposedly promote a believer's ego but do nothing beneficial to their spirit and may even harm their spiritual growth. I was not sure if the prophecy I received was true, and even the student who prophesied told me that it might sound too good to be true to me, but the student was convinced that this was what the Lord had told him to share with me.

Though I received prophetic words that God would use me greatly, I still did not have many prophetic words regarding whether I would have a baby. One Sunday in December the senior pastor of the church associated with Global Awakening suddenly became filled with the Holy Spirit while preaching and prophesied over me saying, “Your quiver is full.” He quoted this from Psalm 127:3–5:

Sons are indeed a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the sons of one’s youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them. He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

He explained to my wife and I that we would have a child, and the Lord would cause us to have more than one child because God was declaring my quiver to be full. I was greatly encouraged but still not quite sure if it was true because I felt I did not personally hear God telling me this. I continued searching. I discovered that an Elijah List Conference would be held in Albany, Oregon in January of 2016. I went to this conference to seek healing and words from the Lord. Before this trip, I read a book by Chuck Pierce, one of the speakers at this conference. In his book, Chuck wrote about the Lord visiting him in the 1980s. The Lord told him that China would have a great revival, and this revival would spread to the entire world.<sup>18</sup>

When I arrived at the conference, another prophet named Dutch Sheets was speaking. In the end, full of the Holy Spirit, Sheets said, “Today you come here not by coincidence. It is God who leads you here, and from today on, you will hear God speaking to you like you never have before.” I was greatly encouraged, so I went out during the lunch break to ask the Lord to speak to me. When I sat down in a chair outside

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<sup>18</sup> Chuck Pierce, *God's Unfolding Battle Plan: A Field Manual for Advancing the Kingdom of God* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2007), 273.

of a Christian bookstore, my eye caught a 2016 calendar. The cover of that calendar said, “2016 Plan Your Family.” Suddenly, I heard God speak clearly to me, “2016, plan your family; you will have a child this year.” I was astonished. I had never heard God speaking to me so clearly, and He just said I would have a child this year! I immediately called my wife and told her what I heard. I finally received my prophetic word from God! It was the most powerful thing I have ever experienced.

I went back to China to visit my family in February 2016. My mother, who still worshiped Buddha, had been desperately praying to all kinds of idols to help us to have a baby. I had been trying to preach the gospel to her since 2002, but I had seen minimal effect. Since I heard God’s voice clearly saying I would have a child this year, I boldly told all my family members. I even prayed for my two cousins who could not have a baby. My mother was displeased with my behavior. She commented that I should not share such nonsense with others since I could not even take care of my own family matters. Despite her comments, I continued to believe the Word I received.

When I came back from China, I attended the Voice of Prophets conference held by Global Awakening in May 2016. There were many prophetic people there who gave me words from the Lord without knowing who I was. One day during worship, a lady from England approached me with a word. She said, “At one point in your life, you always went out to pray and dedicated yourself to the Lord, and God the Father was very pleased with you.” This brought tears to my eyes because only God and I knew of my habitual daily requests in 2014. I often cried out, “God, where are you?” or “God of Abraham, who can create things out of nothing, where are you?” After these prayers, I

would confess my sins and dedicate myself to God and to His calling even though I did not know what it was.

Her words were God's response to those prayers. I experienced 1 Corinthians 14:24–25. The hidden secrets in my heart were revealed and I cried and bowed down to God, amazed that this woman was hearing from Him. God is certainly among these groups of prophetic people. When I asked this woman to ask God if I would have child, she even saw a vision of a male child running. I still hold this word with caution since we only currently have a daughter.

The words did not stop there. Another lady saw me with a quiver of three arrows on my back which matched the prophetic word from my pastor in December 2015. One guy told me that God would use me greatly and he later returned to hand me a key as a prophetic action of God giving me the key to bring many into the Kingdom. I believed these words since the Holy Spirit told me the same things in a prophetic dream where I visited heaven. In this dream in 2017, Jesus himself told me He would use me greatly. Though all the words I received were encouraging, I was eager to receive the fruition of having a child.

I became desperate. One day I said to the Holy Spirit, "In the Charismatic circle, people always teach that we should have an intimate relationship with you. I have prayed to Jesus and God the Father many times, and I do not know when this is going to happen. Can you ask the Father and Jesus for me when this [pregnancy] is going to happen?" On the night of May 12, 2016, shortly after this prayer, I had a weird dream. In this dream, a woman (I figured it was the Holy Spirit) pointed to the back of a male figure (I figured it was Jesus). She asked me, "Did He not tell you that you will have a child next month?" I



said in the dream, “No, I only sensed in the spirit it was coming soon, but I did not know it was next month.” Afterward, I told my wife about this dream, but she again had a tough time believing me.

Before we received our miracle, Satan launched another fierce attack on my wife and I to make us quarrel. We did not talk for two weeks after I told her my dream. We only reconciled once she found out she was miraculously pregnant on May 28, 2016. Our miracle baby girl was born healthy in early 2017. My mother was stunned and turned away from her idols that she had worshipped her whole life. She put faith in Jesus Christ, and I baptized her and my father when I came back to visit China in 2018. Ten years of persuasion and preaching could not change my mother’s heart, but one prophetic word from God turned things around. This event became a turning point for the salvation of my family members. My older sister also confessed belief in Jesus Christ. Later, the Holy Spirit told me through another prophetic dream that what He did in my family, He would do in many Chinese families through my ministry.

### *God Gives Me A Ministry*

In 2016, at the Elijah List Conference, I received another prophetic word from God. This time it was about the ministry I would have. God said to me, “Jairus Bible World Ministry is from me.” At that time, I had begun this ministry in secret since my denomination did not encourage people to have ministries of their own. I used the name “Jairus” as a nickname to spread the revelations that I received from God in an online format. It was mainly directed toward Chinese audiences. When I received the prophetic

word, I understood that God spoke this to help me overcome the fear of man so that I could walk in my calling and fulfill my destiny.

Upon leaving my LCM community, I struggled a lot. They always treated me kindly and helped me greatly during challenging times. Many believers there were like family members to me. I was very troubled thinking that I might be harming the unity of the body of Christ upon leaving. I realized afterward that the body of Christ was and is much bigger than just my denomination.

To help me through this struggle, the Lord gave me a prophetic picture. He showed me one stream of the Yangtze River, which is in Western China. He then showed me another stream in Eastern China, which also flows into the Yangtze River. He reassured me that it was Him who put me in the first stream and now He was taking me to another stream. If I followed His leading, I would remain unified with the body of Christ. This comforted me. In another prophetic dream, the Lord appeared to me, and I saw two rivers behind Him. He told me these two rivers would converge in Maryland where I live. I received many personal prophecies about this too—words about convergence. I heard prophetic proclamations that “holiness and power” and “Word and Spirit” would converge together during this age, and it would represent revival.

One day, after coming back from the Elijah conference, I was walking down the street pondering the revival in China that Chuck Pierce talked about in his book. Suddenly, I heard the Holy Spirit ask me, “What is a big revival?” I immediately answered back, “I heard that in China one out of ten people have received the Lord. Is this not a great revival already?” I answered this way because I had no special burden for

China at the time. My burden was mainly for the Chinese students overseas. I did not have plans to go back to China to minister there.

The Holy Spirit promptly asked me another question, “How about two out of ten?” I was stunned. I quickly calculated that it would be another 100 million people saved. I believe the Holy Spirit was not meaning to limit salvation to only two out of ten Chinese people. Instead, He was trying to challenge and stretch me in my thinking. I had a burden for China after this encounter, and I started to have hundreds of prophetic dreams about a great revival coming to them. In these dreams, I was even brought to future events. I saw the nation change politically after this great revival. Many prophetic words were also released over me from other prophetic people saying that I would travel to China extensively in the future to minister to diverse groups there.

### **Synergy and Conclusion**

It is believed that half or even more of Chinese Christians in China are meeting in Pentecostal or Charismatic churches. I wonder if it is also true among them like it is among some believers in Western Pentecostal and Charismatic churches, that they prophesy well but lack discipline and understanding of the written Word. My assertion may be correct since many of these believers never have had the chance to benefit from Witness Lee’s teachings or practice of PSRP (since they were labeled heretical and banned).

God used the LCM to help me settle into the United States and build a strong life and foundation in the Word of God. I received a teaching anointing in the LCM, and I am a mature, disciplined man of God because of them. Their emphasis on holiness prior to

engaging in forthtelling prophecy ensures spiritual growth and readiness before jumping into making erroneous declarations. To become mature sons and daughters of Christ and ones who partner with God in His Kingdom, we must learn to be intimate friends with Him. This requires us to live a holy and disciplined lifestyle in the Word and in action.

On the contrary, God used Pentecostal and Charismatic churches to help my wife and I receive a breakthrough in healing and teach us about charismatic gifts. We had a miracle daughter as a result of them, and these churches helped activate my prophetic and healing gifts. Prophecy has been extremely important to my journey of spiritual growth. Even when I was having a difficult time deciding whether I should continue with this doctoral program, God used a woman sitting behind me in a prophetic conference to say, “God wants you to finish this degree, and He will use this as a knocking brick to open the doors for you to minister in the future.” I cannot imagine where my life would be without the prophetic.

The synergy of this chapter is formed in these two conclusions. I believe my calling is to continue to teach on the things I learned from both the LCM and Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. I admire the LCM’s diligence to the practices of PSRP. It is my conviction that their model of PSRP could help recover a sincere devotion and commitment to knowing God’s written Word, that which sometimes feels lost in Pentecostal and Charismatic circles. Also, PSRP affords the body of Christ more opportunity to practice public speaking in the form of prophesying.

Comparatively, the LCM and other Evangelical churches need to awaken to recognize that God has used modern Pentecostal and Charismatic groups to recover and revitalize the prophetic gifts. These churches have embraced Paul’s teachings and have

stirred the flame of God into action. They have honored God by honoring His desire to pour out His manifest presence in the form of many gifts to the Body. A prophetic word can change a person's life and can change one's direction for life. A genuine prophetic word can also turn a whole family from worshiping idols to worshiping God. A prophetic word from God can even turn a nation around.

The next chapter of this project will formally address the genuineness of both formats of prophesying (forthtelling and foretelling). The purpose of prophesying is to encourage and edify the believers. The biblical foundations paper explains the purpose of prophecy as Paul intended it to be understood.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

There is a lot of controversy regarding the gift of prophecy and its use within the body of Christ today. Many interpretations of the apostle Paul's writings mislead others to believe that this gift has ceased. These believers strongly advocate for its cessation along with other gifts Paul names. There are, however, denominations and Christian groups who practice the gift of prophecy today and believe in its functionality and necessity. A theological examination of Scripture within 1 Corinthians 12–14 reveals Paul's intention for prophecy and shows that it is still sanctioned by God for today's use.

This chapter will review the biblical passages of 1 Corinthians 13:10, 14:1, 3–4 and 24–25.<sup>1</sup> The role of this chapter is to serve as a biblical foundation showing that prophecy is an effective and profitable gift given to the body of Christ for today. The verses of 1 Corinthians 14:3–4 will especially explore the upbuilding nature of the gift of prophecy. Building up the Church to become Christ's bride, holy and without blemish, is

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<sup>1</sup> “. . . but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.” (1 Cor. 13:10, ESV); “Pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts, and especially that you may prophesy.” (1 Cor. 14:1); “On the other hand, those who prophesy speak to other people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. Those who speak in a tongue build up themselves, but those who prophesy build up the church.” (1 Cor. 14:3–4); “But if all prophesy, an unbeliever or outsider who enters is reproved by all and called to account by all. After the secrets of the unbeliever's heart are disclosed, that person will bow down before God and worship him, declaring, ‘God is really among you.’” (1 Cor. 14:24–25).

Paul's ultimate goal (Eph. 5:27); prophecy is crucial to upbuilding and to the Church at large.

### **Contextual Analysis**

The apostle Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to a church in the city of Corinth, Greece. It is impossible to fully know the situation of the city of Corinth during Paul's time due to limited historical records. However, some details are known and are helpful to provide a social and economic background regarding the church Paul was speaking to. Theologian Richard B. Hays states in his book, *First Corinthians*, "In order to listen intelligently to Paul's conversation with the Corinthians, we must first know a few things about the letter's setting and occasion."<sup>2</sup>

Much of modern Greece existed as two Roman provinces: Macedonia and Achaia. Corinth is the capital of Achaia. Corinth today (and as Paul knew it) is the successor to the city-state of Ancient Corinth. Before Paul came to know the city, it was active as a commercial crossroad between the Adriatic Sea in the west and Aegean Sea in the east. It was located on the Isthmus of Corinth. Since transporting goods from the southern tip of Achaia island to other parts of the world took a long time and was dangerous, ships and cargoes chose to use Corinth's harbors to save costs of transporting their goods. Ships unloaded on either of Corinth's two harbors using its road to travel in between. Corinth boasted of its harbors and because of this it became a prosperous commercial city.

Unfortunately, their prosperity and freedom were interrupted in 146 BCE when the Roman army took control of the city. Roman soldiers destroyed Ancient Corinth and

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<sup>2</sup> Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1997), 2.

enslaved its inhabitants. The city was rebuilt as a Roman colony in 44 BCE and became prosperous again. One hundred years later, Paul visited this newly rebuilt city of Corinth.

According to the New Testament (NT) scholar Mark Allan Powell, modern or new Corinth was also a busy port and famous for its amusements, theaters, and brothels. Powell comments, “Throughout the empire, the expression ‘to act like a Corinthian’ came to be Roman slang for engaging in sexual promiscuity.”<sup>3</sup> This is exemplified in chapter five of 1 Corinthians. Paul deals with an issue regarding a man living with his father’s wife, and Paul claims that such activity was “not found even among pagans” (1 Cor. 5:1). Mark Taylor says in his commentary, “Like other ancient Greek cities, Corinth was notoriously wicked, given over to the vices of idolatry and sexual immorality (cf. Rom. 1:18–32) and associated sins (cf. 1 Cor 5:9–11; 6:9–11).”<sup>4</sup>

Despite Taylor and Powell’s claims, Hays seems to favor a more pronounced promiscuity before Rome controlled Corinth: “The older, pre-Roman Corinth had apparently acquired—at least among the Athenians—a reputation as a center of sexual promiscuity. In fact, it was the Grecian, comic playwright Aristophanes who coined the verb *korinthiazesthai*, meaning “to fornicate.”<sup>5</sup> Hays points out that even recent scholars claim that early comments about the promiscuity of Corinth were exaggerated. For example, author Charles Kingsley Barrett writes in his book, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, “In Paul’s day, Corinth was probably little better and little worse than any

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<sup>3</sup> Mark Allan Powell, *Introducing the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 278.

<sup>4</sup> Mark Taylor, *1 Corinthians. The New American Commentary*, Vol. 28, ed. E. Ray. Clendenen (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 19.

<sup>5</sup> Hays, *First Corinthians*, 4.



other seaport and commercial center of the age.”<sup>6</sup> Hays concludes, “C. K. Barrett puts the topic of Corinthian sexual mores in its proper perspective.”<sup>7</sup>

Regardless of the amount of sexual promiscuity during ancient or modern Corinth, it was present within their society. In his book, *1-2 Corinthians*, Craig S. Keener makes an appropriate suggestion as to the real problem. He states, “Even if some have exaggerated Corinth’s reputation for lewdness, male Gentile sexual behavior diverged significantly from biblical standards.”<sup>8</sup> Biblical standards, especially those set forth by Paul in the book of Galatians, do not leave room for Corinth’s immoral practices. According to Paul’s definition of things pertaining to the flesh, sexual promiscuity is an umbrella term encompassing several on his list.<sup>9</sup> Corinth not only practiced sexual immorality but was also noted for exemplifying strife and idolatry.

Paul refers to the quarrels and divisions that existed when he writes, “For it has been reported to me by Chloe’s people that there are quarrels among you” (1 Cor. 1:11). This was likely caused by various teachings of Christian workers in Corinth since Paul states that some claim, “I belong to Paul,” “I belong to Apollos,” or “I belong to Cephas” (1:12). Although Paul does not mention the reason for why lawsuits existed among the believers in chapter six, we are still informed that there existed enough strife that persons within the church community were taking each other to court (6:1–9).

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<sup>6</sup> Charles Kingsley Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (London, UK: Continuum, 1973), 2.

<sup>7</sup> Hays, *First Corinthians*, 4.

<sup>8</sup> Craig S. Keener, *1-2 Corinthians* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 9.

<sup>9</sup> Paul says, “Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these” (Gal. 5:19–21).

In chapter seven, Paul encourages Corinthian believers to “lead the life that the Lord has assigned” (7:17). He then says, “Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision” (7:18). These verses give us another clue that within the Corinthian church there existed tension between Jewish believers and newly converted Gentile believers. Hays helps us understand Paul’s great task of bringing conformity. He explains,

From Acts 18:1–17, we know that there was also a Jewish community in Corinth, as confirmed by a passing comment by Paul’s contemporary Philo of Alexandria (*Legatio ad Gaium* 281). An inscription referring to the “Synagogue of the Hebrews” has been found in the excavation of the site, but we have no information about the size of the Jewish community, and it appears from the content of Paul’s letters to Corinth that most members of Paul’s fledgling Christian community were of Gentile, rather than Jewish, ancestry. This meant that Paul was faced with a massive task of resocialization, seeking to reshape the moral imaginations of these Gentile converts into patterns of life consonant with the ways of the God of Israel.<sup>10</sup>

Taylor affirms Hays’ conclusion regarding Corinth’s members. Taylor states, “Although Jews numbered among the Corinthian believers, the membership of the church was predominantly Gentile, some of whom had lived formerly shameful lives (6:9–11, 12:2). Most of the Corinthians were of low social status although there was a core group of persons of rank among them.”<sup>11</sup>

There may have been people of low social rank because citizens of the former Corinth had been made slaves when Rome took over. In Paul’s day, however, former slaves became freemen, and some were even given the chance to be selected as city

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<sup>10</sup> Hays, *First Corinthians*, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Taylor, *I Corinthians*, 20.

leaders. The varying social classes and degree of financial possessions were other reasons for strife among their community. Paul infers this in chapter eleven when he writes about eating the Lord's supper. Paul says,

For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I commend you? In this matter I do not commend you! (1 Cor. 11:21–22)

Powell expounds on Paul's statement. He says,

The wealthier members of the church came early and shared with each other whatever they had brought. Members of the lower classes, who labored until dark, came later, bringing whatever meager contributions they could afford. They arrived to find that the elite had already enjoyed a nice banquet and were sated with expensive food and sometimes drunk on fine liquor.<sup>12</sup>

Powell suggests that in Greco-Roman banquets it would be acceptable for the late arrivals to partake in their own supper time together. Paul, however, sees this as a problem since the church was to be unified as they partook. Paul expresses his thoughts by characterizing such a thing as an embarrassment—that a meal to be eaten in remembrance of Jesus (11:24) has become an occasion for humiliating the poor (11:22). Hays makes a concluding statement. He states, “This [socioeconomic diversity] is most evident in the case of the problems surrounding the Lord's Supper, where the ‘haves’ were disregarding and shaming the ‘have-nots.’”<sup>13</sup>

A few other worthy observations about the church in Corinth are noted below. Since the larger congregation was comprised of Gentile converts, the Corinthian church encompassed a large population of former idol worshippers. This is reason for why Paul

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<sup>12</sup> Powell, *Introducing*, 283.

<sup>13</sup> Hays, *First Corinthians*, 7.

addresses the members as “those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints” (1 Cor. 1:2). Hays explains some of the pagan worship below:

The accounts of Strabo and of the second-century C.E. writer Pausanias indicate that the city supported numerous sites of pagan worship and was adorned by magnificent statues of gods and goddesses in public places, including a large statue of Athena in the middle of the agora (marketplace). There was nothing unusual about this. Every significant city in the Greco-Roman world displayed similar temples and statuary. Athens, for instance, is described in Acts 17:16 as being “full of idols.” The Corinthian Christians would have been confronted on a daily basis by these imposing symbolic reminders of the religiopolitical world out of which they had been called.<sup>14</sup>

Other Bible scholars make similar observations. For example, Powell comments, “In Roman society, the gods were blessed and propitiated at virtually all public events, including birthdays, weddings, banquets, business parties, and other affairs that Christians who had any dealings with non-Christians might be invited to attend.”<sup>15</sup> Though Paul was clear that all things were cleansed by God (attending non-Christian events or eating meat once offered to idols), Paul was aware that some had a weaker conscience than others and were not able to engage in such activities to the same extent. Every church has its problems, but it seemed that the church in Corinth had so many that Paul had to deal with them one by one. Paul states almost from the beginning that Corinthian believers acted and were immature in many ways. Paul writes,

And so, brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready, for you are still of the flesh. For as long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations? (1 Cor. 3:1–3)

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<sup>14</sup> Hays, *First Corinthians*, 4.

<sup>15</sup> Powell, *Introducing*, 286–287.

Paul makes other references to their minimal understanding of spiritual matters on several other occasions.<sup>16</sup> Concluding, Corinthian believers lived in faction, strife, division, and other forms of carnal behavior. This, combined with believers' relative infancy in their faith, contributed to their limited spiritual growth. Hays was correct in suggesting that the Corinthian church needed to relearn how to socialize, this time according to the ways desired for them by the God of Israel.<sup>17</sup>

### Formal Analysis

First Corinthians is comprised of sixteen chapters and is one of the fourteen letters Paul wrote in the NT. It is possible Paul wrote a letter before this one, making 1 Corinthians the second letter to the church in Corinth. Hays comments, "From the letter itself we learn that he had written to them at least once previously (5:9); this correspondence, unfortunately, is lost to us, unless a fragment of it is preserved in 2 Cor. 6:14–7:1."<sup>18</sup>

Margaret Mitchell offers insight into the book's primary purpose and helps audiences understand why Paul chose to speak to certain situations. Mitchell uncovers what she believes to be the pivotal issue with the Corinthian church. She states,

The arrangements of 1 Corinthians conform to expectations for deliberative discourse. Paul's response to the Corinthian situation of which he had been

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<sup>16</sup> In chapter two, Paul states, "Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned" (2:14). Following in chapter three, Paul asks, "Are you not men of flesh?" (3:4, Recovery Version Bible). In chapter thirteen, Paul encourages Corinthian believers to grow up by saying, "When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways" (13:11). Finally, in chapter fourteen, Paul charges the Corinthians with "do not be children in your thinking" (14:20).

<sup>17</sup> Hays, *First Corinthians*, 4.

<sup>18</sup> Hays, *First Corinthians*, 5.

variously informed (1:11; 51; 7:1; 11:18; 16:17), likely by several parties soliciting his support for their own position, is an argument in which each of the topics of Corinthian debate (sexual morality, civil procedures, marital relations, the consumption of idol meats, hairstyles, the Lord's supper, the meaning and use of spiritual gifts, the resurrection) is subsumed under a discussion of what he considers to be the seminal problem at Corinth—factionalism—which is the innate cause and further result of these specific contentions. The various questions of Corinthian debate thus become transformed into subordinate arguments in Paul's larger argument throughout 1 Corinthians for the reunification of the church.<sup>19</sup>

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to correct dissensions that he became aware of through members of the Corinthian church. While Powell acknowledges that there are diverse topics covered in 1 Corinthians, he agrees that this book is popularly known for addressing church problems. In fact, Powell considers 1 Corinthians to be “Paul’s epistle to ‘that church with problems.’”<sup>20</sup> Paul’s writing is not simply a letter; it is a sermon, a teaching, constructive criticism—even an argument, and a guide for how the immature may become mature in Christ. Paul employs literary features in 1 Corinthians such as allegory and metaphoric language to help his readers understand spiritual concepts. An example of metaphoric language is Paul’s illustration of the spiritual body versus the physical body (12:12–27); or gifts without love being compared to a clanging cymbal (13:1).

Within 1 Corinthians, many topics are covered. Powell provides a list of the major themes and practical matters which Paul addresses in his letter. These include church unity (1:10–12, 3:4–6, 22, 4:6, 9:5, 11:18–19, 15:5, 16:12); wisdom and power (1:18, 19–20, 23–24, 26–27, 2:3, 14, 3:18–20, 4:9–10, 12:5, 9–10, 13:4, 9); Christ crucified (2:2,

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<sup>19</sup> Margaret Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 1–2.

<sup>20</sup> Powell, *Introducing*, 273.

11:26, 15:31); resurrection of the body (15:5–8, 14–17, 18–19, 23, 24–26, 51–52, 54–57); and Christian freedom (5:1, 2, 6, 6:12, 16–18, 20, 10:23). Practical matters include the Lord’s Supper (11:17–34); excommunication (5:5, 6–7, 11, 13); sexual morality (chapters 5–7 and 10:8); food sacrificed to idols (chapters 8–10); love (chapter 13); and spiritual gifts (chapters 12–14).<sup>21</sup>

Mitchell continues her thoughts on the intent of the letter. She argues that 1 Corinthians “should be read as an extended appeal for unity.”<sup>22</sup> According to a thorough exegetical study of the language and composition of 1 Corinthians, Mitchell concludes that “1 Corinthians is a unified deliberative letter which throughout urges unity on the divided Corinthian church.”<sup>23</sup> Hays takes this concept further by defining “united” in chapter one. He explains,

The word in 1:10 translated by the NRSV as “united” may carry the connotation of restoration to a prior condition, the putting in order of something that has fallen into disarray. (The same verb is used in Mark 1:19/Matt. 4:21 to describe the “mending” of fishing nets; NEB felicitously translates this word in 1 Cor. 1:10 as “firmly joined.”). Paul had left the Corinthian community in a relatively harmonious condition; now he has learned, to his dismay, that quarrels are splitting the church.<sup>24</sup>

When comparing the content of 1 Corinthians to 2 Corinthians, Hays considers this letter to be “what Paul wrote to the Corinthians on a single occasion” whereas 2 Corinthians is “artificially constructed by an editor who has pieced together excerpts from more than one letter of Paul.”<sup>25</sup> Powell believes that 1 Corinthians is a discourse,

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<sup>21</sup> Powell, *Introducing*, 279–290.

<sup>22</sup> Hays, *First Corinthians*, 9.

<sup>23</sup> Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 296.

<sup>24</sup> Hays, *First Corinthians*, 21.

<sup>25</sup> Hays, *First Corinthians*, 9.

but he makes a different comparison regarding the style of 1 Corinthians to the book of Romans, another of Paul's writings. He states,

To some extent, Romans is more theoretical, presenting key theological ideas in a fairly systematic way; 1 Corinthians is more practical, focused on specific issues that have arisen in a particular context. Taken together, the letters offer us a portrait of Paul as theologian and pastor, and what stands out is how interconnected those roles are for him: Romans reveals him to be pastoral in addressing theological issues, and 1 Corinthians reveals him to be theological in dealing with pastoral concerns.<sup>26</sup>

According to this comment, 1 Corinthians may also be thought of as a book of pastoral care meant to answer practical problems within the church of Corinth. While 1 Corinthians is practical, Paul uniquely approaches issues by making theological arguments for them, even when the problems themselves are not theological. Hays comments again,

It is not always clear that the problems addressed by Paul have their basis in explicitly theological ideas. It is Paul who frames the issues in theological terms; indeed, this is an important part of his pastoral strategy, as we shall see.... In many cases, the practices of the Corinthians were motivated by social and cultural factors—such as popular philosophy and rhetoric—that were not consciously theological at all. The brilliance of Paul's letter lies in his ability to diagnose the situation in theological terms and to raise the inchoate theological issues into the light of conscious reflection in light of the gospel.<sup>27</sup>

Hays lists some of these major theological themes in the letter as Christology, apocalyptic eschatology, embodied existent, the primacy of love, and the transformation of power and status through the cross.<sup>28</sup> Chapters twelve through fourteen seem to fit into Hays theme of the primacy of love. This combines with Mitchell's point that Paul's intent

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<sup>26</sup> Powell, *Introducing*, 291.

<sup>27</sup> Hays, *First Corinthians*, 8.

<sup>28</sup> Hays, *First Corinthians*, 8.



is to appeal for unity.<sup>29</sup> Paul works hard to show that unity is a necessary tool to combat the strife and divisions of the Corinthian church (Gal. 5:19–21) because this is the way of love.

Paul frequently emphasizes unity throughout his book. Paul assumes that as the members grow spiritually, unity will be a natural byproduct. He says in Colossians 3:15, for example, “And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body.” In chapter twelve of 1 Corinthians, Paul likens the believers to a spiritual body using the illustration of a physical body with its members intact, working in conjunction with each other. Notice how Paul consistently writes comparing the topics of unity and division, and fleshly, or childish ways versus the spiritually mature.

Paul discusses communal and outward ways of practicing unity such as not verbally boasting to others about Paul or Apollos (3:18–23, 4:6–9); resisting fighting in court (6:1–8); correcting strife between Jewish and Gentile believers (7:17–24); eating the Lord's Supper together (11:17–34); and avoiding conflict by properly stewarding the gift of speaking in tongues (14:1–40). Paul also writes about a proper spiritual perspective of unity and the inward, spiritual attitude believers should possess. This includes boasting in Christ only (1:26–31); being joined to the Lord in one Spirit (6:12–20); all baptized in the same Spirit (10:1–4); imitating Christ (11:1); practicing different gifts which derive from the same Holy Spirit (12:1–11); functioning as one spiritual body (12:12–27); and love as the connecting factor (13:1–13).

While Mitchell makes a good case for unity being the centerpiece of Paul's letter, other scholars do not agree. German theologian Johannes Weiss rejected the theme of

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<sup>29</sup> Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 296.

unity based on perceived inconsistencies within Paul's arguments, especially in comparison to other writings of antiquity.<sup>30</sup> Mitchell, however, defends her conclusions by stating that "the issue of the compositional integrity of 1 Corinthians is, first and foremost, a literary question."<sup>31</sup>

She compares 1 Corinthians to two other deliberative rhetorical pieces from the Greco-Roman period and concludes that deliberative rhetoric like that which Paul uses "was commonly employed within epistolary frameworks in antiquity."<sup>32</sup> She sees no reason for why unity cannot still be the centerpiece for Paul's letter to the Corinthian believers. Hays agrees that unity of the Corinthian church is Paul's primary concern. He says,

The fundamental theme of the letter is sounded in 1:10: "Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. Everything that follows, especially in 1 Corinthians 1:11–4:21, must be understood as an elaboration of this appeal. Paul, writing to a community torn by divisions (schismata), calls for unity."<sup>33</sup>

Hays further stresses his point by stating, "Keeping this passage in focus as the keynote of 1 Corinthians will help us see that Paul's basic concern throughout the letter is the wholeness and integrity of the community."<sup>34</sup> It is within this framework of establishing unity and training the carnal nature of the Corinthian believers that Paul talks about the gift of prophecy in chapters twelve through fourteen. His main burden in these

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<sup>30</sup> Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 2–3.

<sup>31</sup> Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 4–5.

<sup>32</sup> Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 20.

<sup>33</sup> Hays, *First Corinthians*, 21.

<sup>34</sup> Hays, *First Corinthians*, 26.

chapters is to promote the gift of prophecy to build up the church. In other words, Paul's desire is for the Corinthian believers to mature in their spiritual life.

Since Paul sees love as a way of maturing the Corinthian believers, Paul sets himself up for the discussion of love in chapter thirteen by first stating in chapter eight that "love builds up" while "knowledge puffs up" (8:1). He continues to talk about love in chapter thirteen, but within the context of the spiritual gifts. This was undoubtedly purposeful because after all, "Love, as Margaret Mitchell has persuasively argued, is the Pauline antidote to factionalism in the Corinthian church: 'Love is the principle of Christian social unity which Paul urges on the Corinthians' (M. Mitchell, 274)."<sup>35</sup>

Taylor adds to this viewpoint. He purports, "Paul expounds on the theme of edifying love primarily in the context of the gifts of prophecy, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues."<sup>36</sup> In other words, Paul saw an opportunity to teach about love through the example of the gifts. Witness Lee offers another example, demonstrating the connection among chapters and Paul's intentional positioning of them throughout 1 Corinthians. Lee, speaking of the Church Body, states,

The Body has many members, and every member has a gift. This is the reason that after the headship and the Body, Paul comes to the matter of the spiritual gifts. The spiritual gifts are for the functions of the members of the Body. Hence, chapter twelve is the direct continuation of chapter eleven. After discerning the Body, we need to see the importance of all the gifts of the members of the Body.<sup>37</sup>

Lee links the gifts of the Holy Spirit in chapter twelve directly with head coverings and the institution of the Lord's supper in chapter eleven. Many other scholars

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<sup>35</sup> Hays, *First Corinthians*, 222.

<sup>36</sup> Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, 319.

<sup>37</sup> Witness Lee, *Life Study of First Corinthians* (Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1984), chap. 57, sec. 1, <https://www.ministrybooks.org/books.cfm?cid=1CA0>.

mention the connection between twelve and fourteen with the remainder of Paul's chapters. For example, Anthony C. Thiselton says in his book, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, that the gifts are not independent from other topics. Thiselton says,

Too many writers treat 12:1–14:40 as if it were simply an ad hoc response to questions about spiritual gifts (or spiritual persons) rather than an address to this topic within the broader theological framework of 11:2–14:40 in deliberate continuity with 8:1–11:1, and indeed ultimately with 1:1–4:21.<sup>38</sup>

Thiselton gives audiences a broad perspective that is often missed when the chapters on gifts are read out of context. As Thiselton points out, Paul connected his thoughts starting from chapter one. In following chapters, Paul also links his thoughts and intent. In chapter fifteen, Paul talks about the resurrection which makes Jesus and his sacrificial death the center of our prophetic message. In chapter sixteen, Paul charges the saints to offer their material offerings so that others can be blessed by them.

Paul did not write 1 Corinthians to be a practical guidebook of random sections. Instead, he maintains a message throughout, which is to grow into a maturity that unites and brings others closer to Christ. He stresses the care of others in every kind of service. Using the gifts properly and in an orderly fashion is designed to help build unity within the Church. Since the body of Christ is composed of individual believers, it is hard to imagine how it will be built up if every member does not grow up.

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<sup>38</sup> Anthony. C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 900.

### Detailed Analysis of 1 Corinthians 13:10, 14:1, 3–4, 24–25

#### *1 Corinthians 13:10 (ESV)*

*“... but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.”*

Pastor and expository writer, Kurt Jurgensmeier, comments regarding the large debate surrounding this verse 13:10: “The whole debate concerning the apostle’s view of the timing of the cessation of the miraculous gifts can be simplified into two camps: 1) at the completion of the reception and distribution of the NT revelation; or 2) the return of Christ.”<sup>39</sup> Most non–Cessationist scholars, even ones not active in the gift of prophecy, would agree that this verse is not implying perfection as the time when the canon of the NT was completed and Jesus had returned to the Father. Rather, it refers to Christ’s Parousia.

A word study shows that the word “perfect” in Greek is *teleios*. It occurs nineteen times in the Bible and is the same word used in Matthew 5:48 (ESV) when Jesus charges his disciples to be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect.<sup>40</sup> This active verb renders to be matured and finished. It may refer to the ongoing reaching toward a state of maturity of life that God desires for his bride. Wayne Grudem, who writes extensively on miracles and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, explains that the time of perfect must be referring to the time when the Lord returns. He states,

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<sup>39</sup> Kurt Jurgensmeier, *Knowing Our God, Advanced Exegetical Theology Book 8, God’s Apostles* (Lulu.com: Kurt Jurgensmeier, 2012), 215, [https://www.google.com/books/edition/Book\\_8\\_Apostles\\_HC/ge3mAwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1](https://www.google.com/books/edition/Book_8_Apostles_HC/ge3mAwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1).

<sup>40</sup> *Stepbible.org*, s.v. “teleios,” <https://www.stepbible.org/?q=strong=G5046|version=ESV|strong=G5046>.

This is because it has to be the same time as indicated by the word “then” in verse 12. . . . To see “face to face” is an Old Testament phrase for seeing God personally (see Gen. 32:30; Exod. 33:11; Deut. 34:10; Judg. 6:22; Ezek. 20:35—these are the only Old Testament occurrences of this Greek phrase or its Hebrew equivalent, and they all refer to seeing God). The time when I shall know “as I have been known” also must refer to the Lord’s return (1 John 3:2; Rev. 22:4).<sup>41</sup>

We may also logically consider Paul’s argument against its counterpart verses.

Grudem comments that a statement that prophecy and gifts would cease with the canon would not fit Paul’s purpose in his argument because the last NT book was written about thirty-five years after Paul wrote 1 Corinthians. Therefore, Paul would have to be implying that the Corinthians would understand that they only had thirty-five years to practice the gift. Grudem writes, “The context requires rather that Paul be contrasting this age with the age to come and saying that love will endure into eternity.”<sup>42</sup>

### *1 Corinthians 14:1*

*“Pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts, and especially that you may prophesy.”*

Only in chapters 12–14 of 1 Corinthians did Paul start to develop the relationship between gifts and love. By no means did Paul intend to belittle the gifts of the Holy Spirit when he commanded believers to pursue love. Keener states,

Love advises Christians which gifts to seek on the criterion of what will edify the church (12:31, 14:1). Paul frames his discussion on love (13:1–13) with exhortations to seek “the best” gifts, especially prophecy (12:31, 14:1). Love defines which gifts are the “best”: those that build up the body.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Gary S. Greig and Kevin N. Springer, *The Kingdom and the Power* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993), 87.

<sup>42</sup> Greig and Springer, *The Kingdom*, 88.

<sup>43</sup> Keener, *1–2 Corinthians*, 107.

As explained by Tyndale House Commentary, the Greek word for “and” is most commonly rendered “then.” That is, “pursue love, then strive for the spiritual gifts.”<sup>44</sup> In this verse, this conjunction (and) may be translated into a variety of conjunctive particles including “but,” “and,” “then,” and “rather.” In this sentence,  $\delta\epsilon$  (and/then) is marked as a “superaddition of a clause, whether in opposition or in continuation, to what has preceded.”<sup>45</sup> Therefore, it may also render as “on the other hand,” “also,” “now,” “when,” “too,” or “yea” among other possible words. If “and” is replaced by any of these words, it is understood that Paul wishes to urge Corinthian believers to pursue both and neglect neither. As Taylor points out, “The topic of chap. 14 is the edification of the church, which cannot occur apart from the practice of love.”<sup>46</sup> In other words, Paul did not mean for prophecy to be practiced exclusive of love. This is because prophecy without love cannot benefit people or build up the church.

The word “strive” in Greek is  $z\acute{e}lōō$  and it used only twelve times in the NT. Each use of the word carries relatively the same meaning: “to be earnest,” “eager,” “envy,” “desire emulously,” “strive after,” and “to be jealous of.”<sup>47</sup> Interestingly, related words include: “to rekindle,” “be fervent” or “hot,” and even “to burn inwardly.”<sup>48</sup> The same

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<sup>44</sup> *Stepbible.org*, s.v. “and,”  
<https://www.stepbible.org/?q=version=ESV|reference=1Cor.14.1&options=VUGVNH&display=INTERLEAVED>.

<sup>45</sup> *Stepbible.org*, s.v. “and.”

<sup>46</sup> Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, 319.

<sup>47</sup> *Stepbible.org*, s.v. “earnestly desire,”  
<https://www.stepbible.org/?q=version=ESV|reference=1Cor.14.1&options=VUGVNH&display=INTERLEAVED>.

<sup>48</sup> *Stepbible.org*, s.v. “to burn,”  
<https://www.stepbible.org/?q=version=ESV|reference=1Cor.14.1&options=VUGVNH&display=INTERLEAVED>.

word *zēloō* is used in Revelations 3:19: “Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.” Christians are quick to obey John when it comes to bowing their hearts in repentance; in 14:1, however, Paul is encouraging the same kind of zeal in the believer’s pursuit of prophesying. When Paul uses this word in the context of the spiritual gifts, he is not using a past tense conjugation but is advocating a continual hot pursuit of the spiritual gifts, especially to prophesy.

Per Tyndale House, the word “prophesy” in verse 1 is the Greek word *profēteuō* and it is the same word used in verses 3, 4, and 24 (1 Cor. 14). It means “to speak an inspired message—sometimes encouraging obedience to God, sometimes proclaiming the future as a warning to preparedness and continued obedience.”<sup>49</sup> Its definition (according to Paul) has been widely debated and may have various implications. Both suggestions in the definition above imply helping someone to mature in Christ through obedience to God’s paths and standard for living.

#### *1 Corinthians 14:3–4*

*“On the other hand, those who prophesy speak to other people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. Those who speak in a tongue build up themselves, but those who prophesy build up the church.”*

Grudem gives readers a definition for prophecy as stated in his book, *The Gift of Prophecy*. He writes,

Prophecies could include predictions of the future, even though this was not an essential component of prophecy or perhaps even a frequent one. Prophecies could also indicate a person’s spiritual gifts or areas of effective ministry and might even do so in connection with the gift that was being mentioned in the

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<sup>49</sup> *Stepbible.org*, s.v. “prophesy,”  
<https://www.stepbible.org/?q=version=ESV|reference=1Cor.14.1&options=VUGVNH&display=INTERLEAVED>.



prophecy. While prophecies were generally seen as communication from God to man, there is no reason to deny that prophecies could also include occasional elements of “prophetic praise” and “prophetic prayer”—praise and prayer whose content was based on something revealed spontaneously by the Holy Spirit.<sup>50</sup>

Gordon D. Fee, a theologian and minister with the Assemblies of God, offers a more concise definition. He considers prophecy to be “spontaneous, Spirit-inspired intelligible messages, orally delivered in the gathered assembly, intended for the edification or encouragement of the people.”<sup>51</sup> Thiselton adds that prophecy is related to pastoral insight and is more of a reflective process. According to him, prophecy is:

A gift of the Holy Spirit, and combines pastoral insight into the needs of persons, communities, and situations with the ability to address these with a God-given utterance or longer discourse (whether unprompted or prepared with judgment, decision, and rational reflection) leading to challenge or comfort, judgment, or consolation, but ultimately building up the addressees.<sup>52</sup>

In Taylor’s commentary, he points out that Thiselton considers prophecy as “the near equivalent of pastoral preaching.”<sup>53</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner gives another definition. In his book, *Paul, Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology*, he states, “Prophecy is better defined as communicating revelations from God in a spontaneous utterance.”<sup>54</sup> These scholars agree that prophecy is a gift from the Holy Spirit and a form of communication that carries some mystery to it in the way it can confirm or reveal hidden things. According to them, prophecy can bring judgement (correction), comfort,

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<sup>50</sup> Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 2273, Kindle.

<sup>51</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), 595.

<sup>52</sup> Thiselton, *The First Epistle*, 964.

<sup>53</sup> Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, 290–291.

<sup>54</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 360.

or challenge to a person's life; console; and pastorally guide a person in their decision making.

Although the debate continues as to whether the nature of Paul's prophecy was meant to be spontaneous, reflective, or both, most all scholars agree that prophecy is something that should encourage believers and build up the church, and it is likely for the reasons stated above. Taylor concludes after reviewing opinions from Grudem, Thiselton, Schreiner, Ciampa, and Rosner, "In the end, defining the nature of prophecy is not Paul's primary task. Rather, his concern is for the edification of the church, which is the purpose of all the gifts."<sup>55</sup>

This statement brings the readers' attention back to the fact that Paul's intention when writing was not to dispute whether the gifts were relevant for future believers. Paul wished to use the gifts—tongues and prophecy, things already commonly being practiced within the Corinthian church—as examples of how one can draw both believers and unbelievers closer to Christ and mature spiritually. Scholar and NT Professor Craig S. Keener confirms this rationale. He writes,

Paul encourages them to be mature in their thinking (14:20), as he had encouraged them before (3:1-2; for simplicity in evil, cf. Rom 16:19). He then quotes a prophet who, a few lines earlier, warned that Israel acted like infants just weaned from milk, who could handle only the most basic instruction (Is 28:9-10; cf. 28:13).<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, 291.

<sup>56</sup> Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, 114.

What Paul speaks in Ephesians 4:11–16 also echoes this thought which is that all the body members work together with their different gifts to grow into unity together to reach the full stature of Christ.<sup>57</sup>

The word “upbuilding” in verses 3–4 is translated as “edification” in several other versions such as the New American Standard Bible (NASB) and the New King James Version (NKJV). The Greek word is *οικοδομή* (*oikodomē*) and it can mean “building up, edification, strengthening, developing another person’s life through acts and words of love and encouragement.”<sup>58</sup> According to Hays, “the verb *oikodomein* (to build up) and the noun *oikodomē* (upbuilding, edification) occurs seven times in this chapter.”<sup>59</sup>

Ciampa and Rosner explain ‘encouragement’ in their book, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*,

The word translated encouragement has to do with the “act of emboldening another in belief or course of action” (BDAG) and here reinforces the idea of the previous word. It may also mean essentially the same thing as the following word, translated comfort, which has to do with “that which serves as encouragement to one who is depressed or in grief” (BDAG).<sup>60</sup>

Anyone passing through depression, sadness, or grief knows the importance of staying connected to the body of Christ since grief has a way isolating a person. Paul understands

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<sup>57</sup> The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people’s trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love (Eph. 4:11–16).

<sup>58</sup> *Stepbible.org*, s.v. “upbuilding,”  
<https://www.stepbible.org/?q=version=ESV|reference=1Cor.14.3&options=NHVUG>.

<sup>59</sup> Hays, *First Corinthians*, 234.

<sup>60</sup> Roy. E. Ciampa and Brian. S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 672.

that speaking in tongues to a heavy-laden heart does not bring comfort. Instead, acting and speaking words of love and encouragement (prophecy) have the power to bring solace, strength, and inclusion.

The gifts of speaking in tongues and prophecy are considered speech gifts. Raymond F. Collins points out in his book, *First Corinthians*, that Paul uses the word “to speak” twenty-four times.<sup>61</sup> This has everything to do with why Paul compares tongues with prophesying. James 3:5 says, “so also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits.” While James shows the negative impact of the power of speech, Paul refers to it in a positive way. Ciampa and Rosner comment, “Paul literally says that ‘those who prophesy speak strengthening, encouragement and comfort to people.’ That is, the ‘strengthening, encouragement and comfort’ are the direct objects of the verb *speak*.”<sup>62</sup>

Ciampa and Rosner propose that if we were to speak to God with mysteries, the result is that our spiritual man will be built up. That is, with the gift of speaking in tongues, God is addressed, and the speaker is edified; if we prophesy, people are addressed, and the church is edified.<sup>63</sup> The ability to build a community is lost when tongues are used in place of prophecy because incomprehensible words render a body without direction, knowledge, edification, or consolation. Instead of bringing people together, tongues can disrupt the process of collective growth and unity. Hays comments, “In preference to tongues, Paul advocates prophecy as the highest gift, because the

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<sup>61</sup> Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians*, Vol. 7, ed. D.J. Harrington (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 489.

<sup>62</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter*, 673.

<sup>63</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter*, 673.

prophet speaks inspired intelligible messages from God directly to the congregation, thereby building up the church.”<sup>64</sup>

### *1 Corinthians 14:24–25*

*“But if all prophesy, an unbeliever or outsider who enters is reproved by all and called to account by all. After the secrets of the unbeliever’s heart are disclosed, that person will bow down before God and worship him, declaring, ‘God is really among you.’”*

Two Greek words are used in verse 24 that are useful to show that Paul means to say that prophecy can reach those inside and outside of the church. That is, the unbelieving and the believing. “Unbeliever” is the Greek word *apistos* and it refers to those who are “doubting,” “lacking in trust,” and someone who “does not believe the gospel.”<sup>65</sup> It is the same word Jesus uses when he addresses “faithless” generations.<sup>66</sup>

Contrastingly, “outsider” is the Greek word *idiōtēs* and it may translate as “unlearned,” “ordinary,” and “an inquirer.”<sup>67</sup> It may also refer to an “untrained person,” someone “ungifted,” or one “devoid of special learning or gifts, a plain person.”<sup>68</sup> Paul uses this word in two other verses: (1) to describe Peter and John as “common,” uneducated men (Acts 4:13); and (2) to refer to himself as “unskilled” in speaking (2 Cor.

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<sup>64</sup> Hays, *First Corinthians*, 234.

<sup>65</sup> *Stepbible.org*, s.v. “unbeliever,”  
<https://www.stepbible.org/?q=version=ESV|reference=1Cor.14.24-1Cor.14.25&options=VNHUG>.

<sup>66</sup> Matt. 17:17; Mark 9:9; Luke 9:41.

<sup>67</sup> *Stepbible.org*, s.v. “outsider,”  
<https://www.stepbible.org/?q=version=ESV|reference=1Cor.14.24-1Cor.14.25&options=VNHUG>.

<sup>68</sup> *Stepbible.org*, s.v. “outsider,”  
<https://www.stepbible.org/?q=version=ESV|reference=1Cor.14.24-1Cor.14.25&options=VNHUG>.

11:6). Although Paul speaks of prophecy being a tool to reach the unbeliever, it may also be for immature, unlearned persons like the Corinthian believers.

A congregation that prophesies can bring conviction and rebuke and expose and prove what is truth. The active verb in the Greek is *elenchō*, and it is used seventeen other times in the Bible. It can mean “to expose,” “lay bare,” “detect,” “put to proof,” “rebuke,” “refute,” “show fault,” or “convict.”<sup>69</sup> Ciampa and Rosner recognize Paul’s inclusiveness for believers and the power of prophesying when (and if) believers engage in such activity. They say,

Since all believers do have the Spirit and are real candidates to speak prophetically (see Joel 2:28), Paul encourages the Corinthians to pursue gifts such as prophecy and seems to think that any believer might try their hand and see if God might in fact use them to bring prophetic insight to the community. As in the previous verse, here he is describing a hypothetical situation (if everyone were to prophesy) and its potential impact on those who have yet to fully enter the Christian community. As pointed out in the comments on v. 23, the emphasis on inclusive participation is highlighted by the repetition of the word everyone/all three times in this verse: “everyone prophesies, they are convicted by all ... judged by all.”<sup>70</sup>

The power of the gift of prophecy is not only in its intelligibility but also in its ability to carry revelation from the Spirit of God to its hearers to reveal secrets, intentions, motives, sins, stories, and histories. Ciampa and Rosner explain,

While those who speak in tongues “utter mysteries by the Spirit” which are unintelligible to others as the speakers worship individually (v. 2), the prophetic ministry, operating at an intelligible level, brings to light the secrets of the hearts of men and women and leads them to join in the worship of God’s people.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> *Stepbible.org*, s.v. “convicted,”  
<https://www.stepbible.org/?q=version=ESV|reference=1Cor.14.24-1Cor.14.25&options=VNHUG>.

<sup>70</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter*, 706.

<sup>71</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter*, 707–708.

In the English Standard Version (ESV), “secrets” is used in eight verses (OT and NT), but it carries four different meanings in the Greek.<sup>72</sup>

Unlike its counterpart definition in Matthew 13:11, which translates to “a misunderstood part of the kingdom of heaven,” “secrets” in verse 25 (1 Cor. 14) refer to “unseen things.”<sup>73</sup> Its Greek translation *kruptos* is used nineteen times in the Bible and can even refer to “a trench covered and concealed by planks and earth.”<sup>74</sup> Now, imagine the power Paul says prophecy has—that even the deepest secrets (ones in a trench in the earth) can be made *faneros* (disclosed): “visible,” “clear,” “plain,” “known,” “apparent,” and “manifest.”<sup>75</sup>

D.A. Carson describes prophecy’s role in his book, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians, 12–14*. It is “communication designed by the Spirit to expose the secrets of [the unbeliever’s] own heart and thereby to convict him of sin, bringing him to repentance and worship.”<sup>76</sup> Through the revelatory nature of prophetic words, people’s secrets and sins are revealed and they are able to see that God is really among the church. Hays states it this way,

Only when our proclamation plumbs the depth of the human predicament and narrates the extraordinary story of God’s costly redemptive act in Jesus Christ will outsiders and unbelievers recognize that something different is here, that the truth is being told and God is really present.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Job 11:6; Ps. 44:21; Prov. 11:13; Prov. 20:19; Matt. 13:11; Luke 8:10; Rom. 2:16; 1 Cor. 14:25.

<sup>73</sup> *Stepbible.org*, s.v. “secrets,” <https://www.stepbible.org/?q=version=ESV|reference=1Cor.14.24-1Cor.14.25&options=VNHUG>.

<sup>74</sup> *Stepbible.org*, s.v. “kruptos,” <https://www.stepbible.org/?q=version=ESV|strong=G2927&options=NVH&sort=VOCABULARY>.

<sup>75</sup> *Stepbible.org*, s.v. “disclosed,” <https://www.stepbible.org/?q=version=ESV|reference=1Cor.14.24-1Cor.14.25&options=VNHUG>.

<sup>76</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter*, 708.

<sup>77</sup> Hays, *First Corinthians*, 251–252.

These verses parallel Isaiah 45:14 and Zechariah 8:23.<sup>78</sup> Others will be drawn to Christ through the believer's witness. Ciampa and Rosner point out that Paul changed some wording when he expressed this idea of prophecy being a witnessing tool for the nations. They state,

Paul has changed the plural verb ("they will worship") to a singular ("he/she will worship") since he is describing the conversion of an individual, and he has changed the pronoun from the singular ("in your [singular] midst") to the plural ("in your [plural] midst") because he is describing the gathered community rather than the nation of Israel.<sup>79</sup>

Ciampa and Rosner suggest that Paul is speaking specifically to the gathered community of Corinthians as partakers in what once was Israel's mission to evangelize the world. Paul is making the case that evangelization is meant to happen through utilization of the gift of the prophecy. Hays continues this thought process in his book, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture*,

In Paul's scenario it is the church—itsself a predominantly Gentile community—through which God will accomplish the eschatological conversion of outsiders. The Gentile Christian "understudies" seem now to have stepped into the role originally assigned to Israel in Isaiah's eschatological drama. Using the scriptural imagery in a metaphorical manner, Paul has clothed his depiction of the conversion of "outsiders" in language that originally had been used by Isaiah to portray the response of Gentiles to an eschatologically restored Israel.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> This is what the Lord says: "The products of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush, and those tall Sabeans—they will come over to you and will be yours; they will trudge behind you, coming over to you in chains. They will bow down before you and plead with you, saying, 'Surely God is with you, and there is no other; there is no other god.'" (Isa. 45:14). This is what the Lord Almighty says: "In those days ten people from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, 'Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.'" (Zech. 8:23).

<sup>79</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter*, 707.

<sup>80</sup> Richard, B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans, 2005), 4.



Paul considers the Church to be a spiritual body with many members functioning together using the gift of prophecy. Paul mentions that some prophesy while others judge the words; together they deliver a prophetic experience to the unbelievers to turn their hearts to God. Collins commented on verse 24,

The unity of all these prophets (note the use of pan-, “all,” three times in v. 24) contrasts with the cacophony of sounds emitted by those speaking in tongues. Their unified activity can also be brought to bear on the single (tis) unbeliever or outsider who enters the assembly.<sup>81</sup>

Ciampa and Rosner believe this motif of evangelization was disclosed since the beginning of Paul’s letter. Paul referred to the Corinthians as “those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours.” They say,

We argued there that Paul was echoing Malachi 1:11 and the whole eschatological motif of the final universal worship of God which is to be brought about through Christ’s work. The Corinthians have been reminded at key points throughout this letter that they are supposed to bring glory to God as Gentiles who have come to find true wisdom in Christ and his cross and who have learned to flee sexual immorality and idolatry and to give proper worship to the one true God. Their own encounter with Christ had kept them from being led away to idols to being led by the Spirit to confess “Jesus is Lord” (12:2–3) and worship God aright. Their conversion and worship are intended to lead others to do the same. In this way, the gift which has been promoted as the one most effective at building up the community is also now seen as most effective at bringing God glory through the conversion of the nations.<sup>82</sup>

### Synthesis

The letter of 1 Corinthians reveals the apostle Paul’s burden to construct a spiritually mature body of Christ among the Corinthian believers (1 Cor. 3:2, 14:20). The

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<sup>81</sup> Collins, *First Corinthians*, 509.

<sup>82</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter*, 707.

chapters of this letter demonstrate that Paul consistently prioritizes the growth of the community. He is concerned, for example, that practices such as eating meat offered to idols (10:28), the right to marry (9:5), or receiving financial support from the church (9:15) would cause unlearned or weak believers to stumble. Paul later states, “We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do” (8:8). Paul then explains his rationale, “All things are lawful, but not all things are beneficial; all things are lawful, but not all things build up. Do not seek your own advantage, but that of the other” (10:23–24).

Throughout 1 Corinthians, Paul is concerned with do’s and do not’s, but his primary focus revolves around whether one’s actions or deeds would bring unity to the community of believers. Paul even personally gives up his right to many things because he understands that love prefers others above oneself. His point is that seeking the good of the whole is a demonstration of love and in this way the law is fulfilled.

Since Paul’s ultimate commission as an apostle is to build, train and prepare the collective Church for Christ, he understands unity is key. Paul never intends to do away with the gift of prophecy. On the contrary, Paul advises Corinthian believers to be zealous in pursuing the gifts, but in a way that edifies the entire group. He, therefore, instructs believers to be mindful of other members of the body when practicing the gifts. Both tongues and prophecy have the capacity to build and will result in spiritual growth; however, one builds the individual (tongues) and the other builds the community at large (prophecy).

In dealing with the gift of prophecy, Paul wishes to direct believers to focus on (1) maturing and building up the church through being mindful of others (love); (2) building

unity among the believers by strengthening, encouraging and consoling one another; and (3) using the gift of prophecy to (a) train Christians into perfection by helping them reach the maturity of a son or daughter in the Kingdom of God and (b) evangelize, and build the family of God. He both cautions and commissions Corinthian believers to use each gift according to its purpose. Ultimately, Paul understands that it is not simply the message prophesied that builds up people, but the love of God displayed in the act of prophesying that also edifies and strengthens the community of God.

Tongues cannot offer encouragement or consolation (unless translated) because they do not convey messages understandable to humans. Getting revelation and presenting revelation effectively are equally important. We need revelation and knowledge to receive messages from God, and we need prophecy and teaching as tools to convey these received messages. Paul understands this and for this reason he commands believers to focus on prophecy for the sake of growing the Corinthian body since prophecy can bring the factor of intelligibility to its audiences.

Lastly, the word “perfect” (13:10) should be thought of as believers being perfected after the Father. When compared to love, prophecy is a gift given for a time from the Father who gives good gifts, and it will cease. However, the complete or perfect state does not refer to completion of the canon. It refers to reaching the state of maturity of life that God desires for believers as his bride. It is like what Paul says: “until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, the measure of the full stature of Christ” (Eph. 4:13). Prophecy will endure until Christ returns, but it needs to be disclosed within the context of love (13:3). This will bind believers in unity and mature them spiritually, bringing them closer to perfection.

### Reflection and Conclusion

Paul's instructions have significant importance for church congregations today. As Witness Lee suggests, "Every local church is a Corinth."<sup>83</sup> Whether it is matters of being carnal or issues pertaining to the use, misuse, or lack of use of the gifts, each congregation is on a path to maturing in Christ. However, not all churches prophesy and not all churches believe that the gifts exist today. While churches are still struggling to define prophecy and its limitations, they are missing out on engaging in it and reaping its benefits. As a result, congregations mature at a slower rate, miss out on an intimacy with each other and Christ that cannot otherwise be obtained, and evangelize less effectively. This reveals the necessity for this project.

NT prophecy is not perfect. Rather, it was designed to be an intimate process that requires an individual to share the heart and mind of God and not simply deliver a message. By earnestly desiring it, Christians invite the Spirit of God to change them to become more united with Christ, and the result is that others are also invited into that process. Grudem states, "Once we understand prophecy this way, we can allow our churches room to enjoy one of the Holy Spirit's most edifying gifts."<sup>84</sup>

Nevertheless, some may be concerned that they do not know how to prophesy or hear God sufficiently to speak on his behalf. The modern prophet Shawn Bolz states, "the modern prophetic gets a bad reputation because of the immature persons that get

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<sup>83</sup> Witness Lee, *Life Study*, chap. 1, sec. 1.

<sup>84</sup> Wayne. A. Grudem, "Why Christians Can Still Prophecy," *Christianity Today* 32, no. 13 (September 1988): 34, <http://www.waynegrudem.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Why-Christians-Can-Still-Prophecy3.pdf/>.

involved.”<sup>85</sup> To combat this, Bolz suggests that those who want to be prophetic should learn the heart of God. He writes, “You cannot translate what you do not know or understand, and the type of knowing we are talking about is not knowledge based, it is heart based.”<sup>86</sup> Both Bolz and Paul advocate the same thing: out of love and for love, believers prophesy—they come to know the heart of God and allow this to be the content of the Christian message. Only then is prophecy translated best to audiences. This is the picture of 1 Corinthians 14.

The cornerstone of the Christian life should first be to pursue holiness and an intimate relationship with God. Out of this relationship, Christians can encourage and console other believers and edify the Church through the gift of prophecy. Spiritual practices in LCM churches focus on holiness and renewing the mind through meditation on the Word of God. Pentecostal churches are focused on getting supernatural revelation and sharing it. While the LCM lacks using the gifts of the Holy Spirit to receive supernatural revelation, Pentecostal churches can be strengthened by employing the LCM’s practice of meditation (PSRP) to mature in prophesying. Careful attention to the verses of 1 Corinthians 13:10, 14:1, 3–4 and 24–25 in an exegetical reflection offers a biblical foundation for why and how prophecy is a valid and healthy gift given to the worldwide body of Christ for edification, consolation, and strengthening so that Christ may receive her spiritual bride and the nations may be gathered to Him.

The next chapter comprises the life of John Nelson Darby, leader of the Plymouth Brethren movement (PB). Darby had a strong influence on the LCM’s pursuit of holiness.

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<sup>85</sup> Shawn Bolz, *Translating God, Hearing God’s Voice for Yourself and the World Around You* (Glendale, CA: Icreate Productions, 2015), 252, Kindle.

<sup>86</sup> Shawn Bolz, *Translating God*, 2185.

He was also responsible for diminishing early sparks of Pentecostal manifestations of the Spirit of God. This chapter will draw a connection between the importance of both living a holy life and remaining active in the gifts of the Spirit.

## CHAPTER THREE

### HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

#### Introduction

The life of John Nelson Darby largely impacted the development of this project. Darby is a very important person in the LCM. Both founders of the LCM, Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, were influenced by Darby's writings. When Lee asked Nee for recommendations on books that may help him understand the Bible, Nee said the best book was Darby's *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*. Nee even encouraged him to read this set four or five times to understand it well. Eight years later, when Lee came to Shanghai to work with Nee, Nee gave this set of books to Lee as a gift.<sup>1</sup> This shows how much Nee valued Darby's insight.

Not only did Darby's writings and interpretations of the Bible also have a significant impact on Lee, but Lee later even took distant learning classes with C. I. Scofield, an American theologian who succeeded Darby and advanced his teachings on pre-millennialism and futurism.<sup>2</sup> These experiences shaped Lee's view on certain issues

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<sup>1</sup> Witness Lee, *Watchman Nee-A Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age* (Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministries, 1991), 285.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew Austin Clarke, "A Critical Examination of the Ecclesiology of John Nelson Darby" (PhD Thesis, University of Gloucestershire, 2009), 204, [http://eprints.glos.ac.uk/3192/1/545745\\_Redacted.pdf](http://eprints.glos.ac.uk/3192/1/545745_Redacted.pdf).

such as Dispensationalism, which Darby and Scofield were most famous for. Darby is also known for helping start the PB and is the founder of the Exclusive Brethren.<sup>3</sup>

Some accounts suggest that in the early stages of the Plymouth Brethren movement, prophecy, healing, and other Pentecostal manifestations were present. However, due to a misunderstanding that the gifts were only available for the time period of the New Testament, PB leaders extinguished the fire of the Holy Spirit evidenced in these manifestations.<sup>4</sup> At one point, the LCM tried to incorporate the Pentecostal movement into its own movement, but it failed and eventually they closed itself off to the Pentecostal movement.<sup>5</sup> Subsequently, the LCM followed a path of embracing holiness as a Christian lifestyle just as Darby, and also eschewing the pursuit of the gifts of the Holy Spirit as Darby also did.

Since Darby had such a considerable influence on the LCM, this chapter examines him as a historical figure and the two movements/groups to which he was involved: the Plymouth Brethren and Exclusive Brethren. Five aspects of Darby's life are outlined and discussed: (1) his personal life and ministerial accomplishments; (2) his endeavor toward pursuing and establishing holiness and purity within the body of Christ; (3) his belief and practice in *Sola Scriptura*; (4) his attitude and challenge toward hierarchal and organizational structures within the church; and (5) his view on the gifts of the Holy Spirit and case for Dispensationalism.

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<sup>3</sup> Doug Harris, "Exclusive Brethren," Reachout Trust, last modified September 1, 2009, <https://web.archive.org/web/20120226042253/http://www.reachouttrust.org/articlePDFView.php?id=288>.

<sup>4</sup> Marion Field, *John Nelson Darby Prophetic Pioneer* (Godalming, UK: Highland Books, 2008), 1238, Kindle.

<sup>5</sup> Witness Lee, *The Spirit and the Body*, chap. 16, sec. 5 (1976), in Living Stream Ministry, <https://www.ministrybooks.org/books.cfm?n>.



Darby's life and work act as a historical foundation for this thesis because this project seeks to emphasize the necessity for holiness *and* the gifts of the Spirit in order to live the most biblically accurate and effective Christian life. Darby's influence on American church theology is profound and should also be considered since the context for this project includes LCM and Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in the United States. A discussion at the end is included in this chapter and will address the attitude of the PB against early Pentecostal manifestations; Darby's teachings and their effect on the LCM's pursuit toward holiness; and the history of Darby and the Plymouth Movement as it relates to the convergence of holiness and manifestations of power expressed through the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

### **The Life and Ministry of John Nelson Darby**

A famous quote by John Nelson Darby is printed on the first page of Dr. Sunny Ezhumattoor's book, *A Portrait of John Nelson Darby*. It says,

O the joy of having nothing and being nothing, seeing nothing,  
But a living Christ in glory,  
And being careful for nothing but His interests down here.<sup>6</sup>

This quote has been put into a song in the LCM denomination and is commonly sung. It reminds the Christian that what is most important is a life hidden in Christ with one's eyes set on things above (Col. 3:2).

Right on the next page of Ezhumattoor's book, there is another quote by William Blair Neatby regarding the life of Darby. It says,

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<sup>6</sup> Sunny Ezhumattoor, *A Portrait of John Nelson Darby* (Dr Spring, TX: Thekkal Publications, 2016), 1, Kindle.

If Darby had occupied Abraham's position, he might have left behind hardly less than Abraham's fame. It is easy to picture him dwelling in the land of promise as in a strange country, the contented heir of the promises of the world to come; or communing with God in the night-watches, by the lonely tent and altar that mark the stages of his faithful pilgrimage; or despising the gifts of the King of Sodom, and extending a covenant of peace to Philistine Abimelech.<sup>7</sup>

These two quotes accurately summarize the values and principles of Darby. Darby has received both high praises and criticisms for his life and work. One thing is certain: he was noticed for the high value he placed on living a holy and pure life before God.

Darby was born of wealthy Irish parents on November 18, 1800. He was the youngest son in his family and his mother died when he was young. Darby studied at both Westminster School and Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland. Darby initially studied law but later gave up this career to serve God. This decision not only disappointed his father but also his brother-in-law who was the Lord Chief Justice of Ireland. This did not change Darby's mind, however. Darby converted to Christianity at the age of twenty-one and became a deacon in the Church of England in 1825. According to him, "I longed for complete devotedness to the work of God."<sup>8</sup>

Darby was greatly concerned with the degradation and division of the Church that he witnessed firsthand while serving the Church of England. He resigned from his position of deacon in protest against converts being forced to swear allegiance to the King of Ireland. This is when Darby began to meet with other believers to break bread together and to fellowship. This was the initiation of the Plymouth Brethren movement.

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<sup>7</sup> Ezhumattoor, *A Portrait*, 2.

<sup>8</sup> Christianity Today, "John Nelson Darby: Father of Dispensationalism," *Christianity History*, August 2008, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/pastorsandpreachers/john-nelson-darby.html>.

Like all other revivals in history, this can be summed up as another wave of the sea, but an important one.

Darby was not a perfect man, but he certainly strove to be Christlike. He was considered stubborn by some and he tended to deviate from the Scriptures in certain areas.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, he had a pure heart toward God and a kind and loving disposition toward human beings. He is also considered a great Bible teacher. William Kelly, a friend of Darby and a famous biblical scholar who worked with Darby for about forty years, called Darby “a saint more true to Christ’s name and Word I never knew or heard of.”<sup>10</sup>

In the forward to Ezhumattoor’s book, Dr. Alexander Kurian Dallas said something similar: “. . . [A] saint and a servant with deeper insight into God’s mind in Scripture than any other I ever knew or heard of in any age since the apostles.”<sup>11</sup> Not only did Darby strive to maintain a holy life in practice, but holiness was a lens he wore when laboring for the Lord. His decisions, ministry for the Lord and quarrels with persons can be traced back to his allegiance to holiness.

### *Darby’s Endeavors: Pursuing Holiness and Purity in Christ*

Darby once visited a Christian brother who was a rich businessman in Switzerland. This brother had a habit of treating visitors to special foods and a place to rest. Upon visiting him, Darby entered the house from the back door and was recognized by his friend’s servant as a normal guest. Darby never disclosed his identity to the servant

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<sup>9</sup> Ezhumattoor, *A Portrait*, 27.

<sup>10</sup> William Kelly, *John Nelson Darby As I Knew Him* (Jagdishpur, Bhagalpur, IN: Rani Publications, 2017), 189, Kindle.

<sup>11</sup> Ezhumattoor, *A Portrait*, 63.

and happily stayed with the other guests who received ordinary treatment. Darby consistently tried not to exalt himself even as he was gaining great fame. Darby never married and devoted his whole life to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Darby was also humble and sympathetic toward the poor and children, attending to the needs presented to him. He visited the USA many times. One time he refused a famous brother's invitation and chose to visit a poor brother's house instead. Marion Field recollects Darby's heart to care for children in her biography of him. Field writes, "If he noticed that a child had gone to sleep in an uncomfortable position during a meeting, he would often roll up his coat and gently place it under the child's head as a pillow."<sup>12</sup> People would also see Darby play for hours with little children or see him carrying a baby at night to let the baby's tired mother sleep.

By way of contrast, a famous Pentecostal healing evangelist threatened to stop a meeting if the mother of a crying baby did not quiet the chaos in the room. The evangelist commented that the Holy Spirit loves quiet and that He, the Holy Spirit, would be disturbed by the crying baby. God the Father loves children. Jesus welcomed children (Matt. 19:13–14; Mark 10:13–16; Luke 18:15–17). Darby's character represented the Father's heart; a heart full of pure love.

In Darby's early life, he gave up a prominent career in law and did not rely on his family to support him financially. Besides his stipend from the church, Darby had inherited money. Instead of using it for a comfortable life, Darby used this money to build schools and help others. He thought Christians should live by faith in Christ. When many Irish Protestant ministers appealed to the government to protect them from Catholic

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<sup>12</sup> Field, *John Nelson*, 2612.

influences, Darby was against it. He also thought Christians should share the suffering of Christ instead of seeking protection from the world. Darby was against ministers fighting the world with worldly means.

While Darby was also concerned with a lack of unity among the believers of Christ, he was perhaps most troubled that the church mixed itself with nationalism and the world. Darby wished to be a pure follower of Christ and to share in His suffering. This is one of reasons he later became the leader of the Exclusive Brethren. His intention was to remove the impurity of the church by not fellowshiping with those who were in sin or still living in communion with the world.

Purity of the individual and of the body of Christ were unnegotiable for Darby, especially after seeing the worldliness within the Church of England. In one of his hymns, “A Song of the Wilderness,” Darby writes, “The world is a wilderness wide; I have nothing to seek nor to choose; I have no thought in the waste to abide; I have naught to regret nor to lose.”<sup>13</sup> Serving the Church of England produced in Darby a resolution of absoluteness to the gospel and a wholeheartedness to separate from the world and pursue holiness.

Darby was not the only one who insisted on pursuing individual holiness. When revival came to Plymouth, many members followed the same pattern to abstain from worldly entertainment. Field writes, “As Plymouth boasted a theatre, audiences dwindled so much that it had to be closed. The manager, who had suffered great financial loss,

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<sup>13</sup> Field, *John Nelson*, 563.

showed no resentment, but in fact joined the Brethren himself.”<sup>14</sup> Others also gave up their possessions. Field continues,

There was no distinction between rich and poor and all wore simple plain clothes and dispensed with many of their worldly good. In their “separation from the world” and while “waiting for the Lord’s return,” they felt they had no need of such things. As many of the brethren possessed great wealth, they owned many unnecessary items and it was decided that brothers and sisters should make a “freewill offering” of their unnecessary goods. So many books, items of clothing, ornaments and even furniture were contributed that an auction was held. It lasted three days and raised a great deal of money.<sup>15</sup>

Separating from the world was a noticeable characteristic of the Brethren Movement. This idea, initiated by Darby, affected many. Some believers even also gave up their worldly positions or professions to follow Christ. While this movement gained a lot of adherents, Darby was criticized by some for having a distorted view. Critics claimed that Darby “was aware that believers were *in* the world but should not be *of* it.”<sup>16</sup>

Darby’s most famous work is the creation of the *Darby Bible*. It was translated into several languages including English, German, French, and Greek. It has profound insight into the Scriptures. Darby’s vast knowledge of languages enabled him, with the help of other scholars, to produce this and many other outstanding works. Darby says in the preface of his 1890 edition of the Old Testament, “In the issue of this translation, the purpose is not to offer to the man of letters a learned work, but rather to provide the simple and unlearned reader with as exact a translation as possible.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Field, *John Nelson*, 787.

<sup>15</sup> Field, *John Nelson*, 787.

<sup>16</sup> Field, *John Nelson*, 875.

<sup>17</sup> J. N. Darby, *The Holy Scriptures: A New Translation from the Original Languages* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1996).

His book set of the *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*, while having influenced both Nee and Lee of the LCM, also influenced many Christian theologians and preachers in the West including George Müller and D. L. Moody. Many positive things may be said about Darby's work, but Witness Lee's statement sums it up. Lee comments,

In addition to translating the Bible into English, French, and German, Darby also wrote many books. It is difficult to say how he found the time to produce so many precious books. . . If Darby had not become a servant of the Lord, he would have been famous in the world because he had a great soul. . . I believe that all those living before God today with a proper knowledge of the Bible have been helped by the Brethren. Even those who oppose the Brethren have received help from them perhaps unknowingly.<sup>18</sup>

### *Darby's Challenge to the Establishment and Sola Scriptura*

Darby's reason for leaving the Church of England was profound. Darby says,

I find no such thing as a national church in Scripture. Is the Church of England—was it ever—God's assembly in England? I say then that her constitution is worldly because she contemplates by her constitution—it is her boast—the population, nor the saints. The man, who would say that the Church of England is a gathering of saints, must be a very odd man, or a very bold one. All the parishioners are bound to attend by her principles. It was not the details of the sacramental and priestly system which drove me from the establishment, deadly as they are in their nature. It was that I was looking for the body of Christ (which was not there but perhaps in the entire parish not one converted person); and collaterally, because I believed in a divinely appointed ministry. If Paul had come, he could not have preached (he had never been ordained); if a wicked ordained man, he had his title and must be recognized as a minister; the truest minister of Christ unordained could not. It was a system contrary to what I found in Scripture.<sup>19</sup>

From this statement, we can see Darby was very brave to challenge the establishment. This is characteristic of persons God uses in every generation to bring forth a new movement. In 1826, after stepping down from the Church of England, Darby

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<sup>18</sup> Witness Lee, *Three Aspects of the Church, Book 2: The Course of the Church*, chap.14, sec. 1 (2006), in Living Stream Ministry, <https://www.ministrybooks.org/books.cfm?p>.

<sup>19</sup> Ezhumattoor, *A Portrait*, 290.

had an accident while riding a horse. During his time of recovery, Darby began to meditate on the Scriptures deeply. He claims it was during this time that he received the revelation that the true Church of God is composed of genuine believers of Christ who are united with the life Christ. To Darby, a true Church of God was not one constructed from hierarchal structures. Darby stated,

I saw in Scripture that there were certain “gifts” which formed true ministry, in contrast to a clergy established upon another principle. Salvation, the Church, and ministry all were bound together, all were connected with Christ, the Head of the Church in heaven; with Christ, who had accomplished a perfect salvation, as well as the presence of the Spirit on earth uniting the members to the Head and to each other, so as to form “one body”, and He, acting in them, should characterize the Church and each one of the members.<sup>20</sup>

Darby’s point is to say that members should be connected to one another on an equal playing field, and all henceforth joined to Christ, the Head. He also wished to say that the body of Christ is an organism and living entity instead of an organizational and dead structure. Darby criticized the nationalism that permeated the Church in England. Darby believed authority should remain with the Bible instead of being given to men or even kings. Likewise, members of the body of Christ and the gifts they held should be valued over the institutional clergy system that had emerged in England.

In addition to disagreeing with church establishment, Darby strongly advocated a viewpoint that placed high emphasis on the authority of Scripture. His conviction became a characteristic of the PB and was known as *Sola Scriptura* (by Scripture alone). Their intention was to elevate the authority of the Bible above any man, religion, or religious tradition. A crucial aspect of *Sola Scriptura* was that no religious institution or jurisdiction, including the Pope, could be considered superior to Scripture. The

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<sup>20</sup> Ezhumattoor, *A Portrait*, 343.



Brethren's promulgation of *Sola Scriptura* was a continuance of a tradition from Martin Luther and his reform movement.

Deinstitutionalization of the Church (to become holier) and the institutionalization of *Sola Scriptura* were dominant themes of Darby's life and work, so much so that Ezhumattoor commented (comparing Darby to John Wesley), "John Wesley never conscientiously brought himself to separate from the establishment. John Darby, on the other hand, could not conscientiously bring himself to remain within her pale."<sup>21</sup>

A review of the history of Christianity reminds us that the Church of England birthed from King Henry VIII's denied approval by the Pope for a marital divorce. Historian Justo L. Gonzalez says, "Henry VIII, earlier known for his defense of Catholicism against Luther, and in no way a supporter of Protestant doctrine, led the Church of England in its break with Rome."<sup>22</sup> What followed was not the kind of transformation for the Church of England that Darby would have hoped for, but a change in leadership from a pope to kings.

If the statement of Ezhumattoor is true—that Wesley did not manage (for conscience's sake or otherwise) to separate entirely from the state—then perhaps God raised up someone that could differentiate the Church from the establishment entirely. God used Darby to bring this conviction where it lacked. Although Darby considered the churches in his time to be hopeless and corrupted institutions, he understood that there still existed genuine believers in these institutions.

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<sup>21</sup> Ezhumattoor, *A Portrait*, 396.

<sup>22</sup> Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity, Volume II, The Reformation to the Present Day, Revised and Updated* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2010), 89.

Darby never intended to create a new denomination. Darby simply wanted an authentic experience fellowshiping with other likeminded Christians. Eventually Darby's fellowship with other brothers resulted in the Plymouth Brethren movement. Gradually and reluctantly, this group accepted being called "brethren," and in later years, Darby accepted the name "Plymouth Brethren" to differentiate them from other groups also known as the Brethren.

*Darby, the Plymouth Brethren, and the Exclusive Brethren*

Naturally, holiness and deinstitutionalization of the Church were two major characteristics that defined the PB. Massimo Introvigne, a historian of the Plymouth Brethren says about them, "Many were attracted by their radical criticism of certain features of modernity, including individualism and materialism, in the name of Gospel."<sup>23</sup> The leaders of the movement hoped to create a communion of saints where every believer functioned in a position of priesthood. This is in accordance with 1 Peter 2:9 which labels all believers together as God's priesthood. For the PB, this meant to them that no one should have positions of authority in the format of an established hierarchy. As one can imagine, their idea failed to become what they anticipated.

Introvigne comments, "The Brethren were accused by some other Christians of being sectarian, short-minded, and even heretics."<sup>24</sup> Introvigne continues by commenting on the book, *The Churching of America*, written by American sociologists Roger Finke and Rodney Stark. He says,

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<sup>23</sup> Massimo Introvigne, *The Plymouth Brethren* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. 2018), 87, Kindle.

<sup>24</sup> Introvigne, *The Plymouth*, 87.

The spirit of Protestantism, Stark and Finke claim, is in itself anti-institutional. Its protest is largely about the corruption it regards as inherent in large structures and instructional churches. Often in history, Protestants have proclaimed their desire to move ‘outside of Babylon’ and to return to the ‘purity’ of primitive Christianity. According to Finke and Stark’s model, these ‘good intentions’ normally would not last long. Little by little, the second generation of each new Protestant wave will in turn start a journey toward institutionalization.<sup>25</sup>

According to Introvigne and much of what we have seen in the history of Christianity, it is inevitable that the institutionalization of the Church would return. Regardless, Darby was adamant in defending the purity of the body of Christ and supremacy of the Scriptures. He was not looking for fame for himself or building a splendid work to his name. Darby wished to simply remain devoted to seeking the Lord and defending the truth. Unfortunately, this sometimes resulted in harsh responses toward others who did not agree with Darby. Field comments on Darby’s attitude,

Darby’s authoritarian behavior did not have the result he expected. Although he had firmly rejected the ‘Notion of a Clergyman,’ some felt he was behaving more like a pope. He obviously expected the rest of the Brethren to follow his lead without question.<sup>26</sup>

Ironically, although Darby opposed the clergy system, this very system which boasts to authoritarianism was evident in some of his behaviors. One of the things Darby did not agree with was Newton’s authoritative way of leading the Church in Plymouth because he thought it hindered the Holy Spirit from speaking through every member of the meeting. Yet, Darby displayed a similar attitude to that which he opposed in Newton.

Throughout the ages, many Christian groups strove to be purist in nature, but they often mistakenly judged other Christians who held different or lesser standards. To

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<sup>25</sup> Introvigne, *The Plymouth*, 159.

<sup>26</sup> Ezhumattoor, *A Portrait*, 2341.

Darby's detriment, he placed harsh standards on many and ignored that even the Lord Jesus himself said that the tares should grow together with the wheat until the harvest (Matt. 13:30). Nevertheless, we should not despise what Darby did by separating himself and others from the religious establishment and worldly influences. Afterall, Jesus did teach that His followers are not of this world like He was not (John 17:14–6).

If Darby had been focused on building a work for himself, he may have tried to avoid a conflict with Newton, and thus the PB may have avoided a split. However, since Darby only cared about God and His interest, he did not fear conflict with others. Darby and Newton's disagreements became too many. Eventually, they split, and Darby became the leading figure of the Exclusive Brethren. The Exclusive Brethren later suffered several splits.

Despite the PB's failure to overcome institutionalization, their emphasis on preventing the degradation of the Church was still valid. The PB promoted and advanced many positive things for the Church. Lee comments, "In the nineteenth century, the brothers of the so-called Brethren assemblies were raised up. This was one of God's great recoveries in the history of the church. This recovery was exceedingly strong and very rich."<sup>27</sup>

Taken from Lee's publication is a condensed and paraphrased version of his notes below. The recovered items Lee references include the practices of forsaking the world, brotherly love, practical living, and adherence to the truth. First, the Brethren upheld a total forsakenness to the world. Lee comments,

Within church history, it is rare to see a group break its ties with the world as cleanly as the Brethren did. They were much more advanced than the Moravian

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<sup>27</sup> Lee, *Three Aspects*, chap. 14, sec. 1.

Brethren. The Moravian Brethren broke their ties with politics and religious organizations; the Brethren not only forsook politics and religious organization, but also the world.<sup>28</sup>

Even today, there are some among the Brethren who have never had their photo taken in order that no traces of themselves are left behind for people to see. In fact, this is also the reason why it is difficult to find an accurate biography of Darby—because he did not allow people to write about him or publicize his work. Even some of the Brethren who had been given noble titles wrote letters respectfully to the English monarch renouncing their titles.

Next, the Brethren recovered the act of brotherly love. Although Lee does not name examples of this, he affirms the PB's love for one another by making an analogy to the Greek meaning of "brotherly love" behind the name "Philadelphia." Lee states, "They had the reality of the brotherly love in Philadelphia."<sup>29</sup> Third, the Brethren did not ignore living a practical Christian life. Lee comments that it is likely that no other Christian group in the history of the Church has equaled the Brethren in the matter of practical living. The practical living of the Brethren meant living the Christian life as families helping one another. Supposedly, some of the best Christian families in the entire world were those of the Brethren.

Lastly, the Brethren upheld a sworn allegiance to the truth. Lee thinks that most Christians acknowledge that the PB's recovery of the truths from the Word of God and their revelation surpassed everything before it. This has a lot to do with the insights Darby and other authors of his kind brought to the movement. Lee considered Darby the

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<sup>28</sup> Lee, *Three Aspects*, chap. 14, sec. 1.

<sup>29</sup> Lee, *Three Aspects*, chap. 14, sec. 1.

“king of Bible exposition.”<sup>30</sup> Orthodox beliefs and practices taught in Protestantism today have been largely influenced by the teachings of the Brethren. Lee says that Moody once commented that if all the books in the entire world were burned, he would be satisfied to have a copy of two things: The Bible and *Notes on the Pentateuch* by the Brethren author, C. H. Mackintosh.<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, *The Scofield Reference Bible* may be indirectly credited to the PB. This is a reference Bible that many preachers cannot do without, according to Lee. Scofield also wrote the *Scofield's Bible Correspondence Course*. Lee states that almost ninety percent of Scofield's writing in these two publications was adopted from PB teaching. That is, Scofield compiled and edited Brethren material, passing it on.<sup>32</sup>

Many basic truths concerning things such as the Church, the Lord's return, prophecy, and the separation between the Church and the world, were written about by the Brethren. Lee mentions that Luther is credited with recovering the truth of justification by faith, but it was not Luther who wrote and clearly expounded upon this principle. Rather, it was the PB who thoroughly advanced the meanings of sanctification and justification by faith.<sup>33</sup> Darby also wrote hymns which are still sung in LCM congregations.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Lee, *Three Aspects*, chap. 14, sec. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Lee, *Three Aspects*, chap. 14, sec. 1.

<sup>32</sup> Lee, *Three Aspects*, chap. 14, sec. 1.

<sup>33</sup> Lee, *Three Aspects*, chap. 14, sec. 1.

<sup>34</sup> The first two stanzas of Darby's hymn #47 are: Father, Thy name our souls would bless; as children taught by grace; lift up our hearts in righteousness, and joy before Thy face. Sweet is the confidence Thou giv'st; though high above our praise; our hearts resort to where Thou liv'st, in heaven's unclouded rays. Brother Watchman Nee translated this hymn into Chinese and improved the original English version.

Regarding the PB, Ezhumattoor quoted author Wilbur M. Smith who stated, “Of all the groups of Christian believers that developed in the English-speaking world in the nineteenth century, that one which produced the greatest number of gifted writers was the Brethren.”<sup>35</sup> Ezhumattoor recognized though that despite Smith’s view, very few Christians with fundamental New Testament beliefs recognize how much they owe to this movement. Although people may condemn the PB today, their contributions are of enormous value and perhaps may only be justly measured in eternity.

*Darby’s View on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit*

Often throughout history, Christian movements have displayed a pattern. Either ministers belittled the gifts of the Holy Spirit or neglected the fruits of the Holy Spirit that produce holiness. Darby committed the former error. Darby recognized the importance of three gifts—evangelist, pastor, and teacher. He disregarded the gift manifestations of the Spirit described in 1 Corinthians 12. Darby did, however, seek to understand these manifestations before he decided on their authenticity. Ezhumattoor writes about this in Darby’s visit to Scotland:

The purpose of his visit to Scotland was to investigate what had been called the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, accompanied by gifts of healing, and speaking in tongues. Darby’s verdict was negative. He felt that in the early Church the sign gifts—including healing, miracles, and speaking in tongues—were given so that the world could see a demonstration of God’s power and blessing upon Christianity (1 Corinthians 14:22). Miracles were linked to the original establishment of a new testimony of God and were meant to be temporary.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ezhumattoor, *A Portrait*, 63.

<sup>36</sup> Ezhumattoor, *A Portrait*, 767.

In Field's account, Darby's indifference toward the gifts resembles cessationist arguments. Field writes,

He visited Oxford several times and also ventured north to Row in Scotland where the gifts of the Holy Spirit—speaking in tongues, healing and other miracles mentioned by St Paul—were in evidence. Darby was not impressed. He felt those gifts had been given specifically to the early Church to provide evidence of God's power. He did not consider them relevant today—a view still held by some brethren.<sup>37</sup>

While Darby did not embrace the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, he did believe that God gifted persons for the ministry of the gospel. Matthew Austin Clarke comments on Darby's attitude toward the gifts and his association with Edward Irving who practiced them. He says,

While Darby emphasized the use of gifts in ministry, he did not believe that Christians should seek such miraculous gifts as speaking in tongues, prophecy, and healings. Darby did not spend long arguing for the cessation of miraculous gifts. Darby had encountered the advocacy of miraculous gifts in the followers of Edward Irving, later the Catholic Apostolic Church. . . . Darby seems to have been more concerned with refuting the peculiar doctrines of the Irvingites than with challenging their expectancy of spiritual gifts. He believed the fact that the Irvingites were in error doctrinally showed the falseness of their charismatic manifestations. Darby seems to have assumed that the miraculous gifts had ceased was a empirical fact that needed little defense.<sup>38</sup>

Clarke continues,

This is Darby's most definite statement as to the cessation of miraculous gifts. Here he denied that the cessation of gifts was taught in Scripture. Rather, the present weak state of the church was not a subject of prophecy. The church, as was mentioned in the previous chapter is a parenthetical period in the history of the world and salvation. It is a 'timeless heavenly gap.' Signs and wonders had a role in confirming the new dispensation but were not needed now that it was in progress. One argument that Darby sometimes used against miraculous gifts being given today was appropriateness. He argued that it would be inconsistent with the character of God for new miracles to be given today.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Field, *John Nelson*, 1238.

<sup>38</sup> Clarke, "A Critical Examination," 166.

<sup>39</sup> Clarke, "A Critical Examination," 167.



While Darby helped shape the cessationist view that many hold today, his concern was more regarding the fact that the gifts were inappropriate for the times. This conclusion stems from his theology of Dispensationalism. Unlike Cessationists today, Darby did not spend his energy defending a theology of the gifts. He rather separated himself from those who practiced them, and he maintained a focus on purity. Darby instead promoted dispensationalist theology and the viewpoint that the gifts were only signs to confirm the new dispensation. Since the desolated church in his time was neither in a new dispensation or perfect, he thought God should not confirm her with signs and wonders. Clarke quotes Darby's own words to explain his viewpoint:

If God were to exhibit His power now in the church by giving it the gifts it once had, He would be acting inconsistently with His own righteousness in identifying Himself with that which has lost its moral character; for surely it is not now the exhibition of what Christ was in the world. But, on the other hand, if the Lord did not now minister the gifts mentioned in the Ephesians, He would fail in maintaining the blessedness of His character, and the steadfastness of His love to the church.<sup>40</sup>

Clarke continues,

Thus, God would not confer the miraculous power on churches in error, as that would have overlooked their faults, and God would not confer miraculous power on the Brethren, as that would not have increased their humility. It might be argued in reply that God conferred miraculous power on the Corinthian and Galatian churches, despite their faults. However, Darby would have countered this by arguing that the miracles in those churches did not confirm the local churches, but the new entity of Christianity.<sup>41</sup>

Darby tied the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to the maturity of the church. He makes the argument that if the state of the Church were not perfect, which it was not, and

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<sup>40</sup> Clarke, "A Critical Examination," 167.

<sup>41</sup> Clarke, "A Critical Examination," 168–170.

God backed her up with gifts and powers anyway, it would make the Church that displayed the miraculous look like the complete chosen and perfect Church. It would also cause that church or the Plymouth Brethren to become proud.

Darby had a point to say that the gifts of the Holy Spirit could make an immature person or immature church prideful. However, it could also be argued the opposite. Just as Darby tried to fight against institutionalization of the Church with an authoritarian upper hand, Darby could also be considered prideful himself for rejecting the gifts of the Holy Spirit instead of receiving them. In fact, receiving and being active in the gifts matures the Church, according to the apostle Paul (Eph. 4:7–13).

#### *Dispensationalism and the Schism between Darby and Newton*

Dispensationalism as promoted by Darby is still a very controversial topic among theologians and scholars. Dispensationalism, according to *Merriam–Webster Dictionary*, is the “adherence to or advocacy of a system of interpreting history in terms of a series of God’s dispensations.”<sup>42</sup> While taking a New Testament prophetic class at Randy Clark’s Global Awakening institution, my teacher, Adam Knapp, challenged my former views on Dispensationalism. He commented on my assignment that Dispensational Eschatology is one of the most errant and inappropriate approaches to Scripture today. Among other things that Knapp explained to me, he mentioned that Dispensationalism was developed by Darby based on a vision a girl received.

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<sup>42</sup> *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. “dispensationalism,” <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dispensationalism>.

Supposedly, a girl from Scotland received a vision about the Church's rapture and that it would happen before the antichrist comes. This statement is quite controversial. Several scholars including Mal Couch<sup>43</sup> and Sunny Ezhumattoor<sup>44</sup> attributed the source of this statement to Dave MacPherson, and they refuted MacPherson's claim. Ezhumattoor believes this statement is speculation from someone that is anti-rapture. Ezhumattoor states, the "most famous false claim is that supposedly given by a fifteen-year-old Scottish young woman named Margaret MacDonald in the spring to 1830."<sup>45</sup>

Despite Ezhumattoor's conclusion, no one knows the origin for this theory. Another theory suggests that Darby developed dispensationalist viewpoints based on "one of the outbursts of tongues in Edward Irving's church."<sup>46</sup> Ezhumattoor comments that Edward Irving was teaching heresy regarding the sinfulness of Christ's humanity but denies that Darby's theory has anything to do with Irving.

Regardless of how Darby came to believe in, develop, and father Dispensationalism, Darby strongly believed in his viewpoint. He believed that Bible history unfolds in a large meta-narrative of dispensations, and the Church will be taken from earth to be with Christ before a tribulation period. Field writes,

Dispensationalism certainly has powerful defenders to this day and by being solidly on the fundamentalist side of in the early twentieth century debate against modernism, dispensationalists increased their credibility with Bible-believing Christians in the USA and everywhere. Nevertheless, neither the Catholics nor the Anglicans nor the mainline Reformed denominations have incorporated the basic tenet of a Heavenly people / earthly people dualism. For them, the Old Covenant

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<sup>43</sup> Mal Couch, *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1997), 244.

<sup>44</sup> Ezhumattoor, *A Portrait*, 1500.

<sup>45</sup> Ezhumattoor, *A Portrait*, 1500.

<sup>46</sup> Ezhumattoor, *A Portrait*, 1547.

was fulfilled and rendered obsolete at Calvary and has been replaced with the New Covenant of Jew and Gentile alike.<sup>47</sup>

One of the most controversial issues in Darby's life was his schism with his friend Benjamin Wills Newton. Ezhumattoor says,

Newton viewed with extreme disfavor any departure from Puritan theology, except along eschatological lines. For him, the Church included all the faithful from Abraham down. He considered Mr. Darby's dispensational teaching as the height of speculative nonsense. He was vehemently opposed to the idea of the Church being a special company of whose calling and destiny the Old Testament knows nothing—a line of things emphasized by Mr. Darby.<sup>48</sup>

Newton also strongly insisted that the Church will go through a tribulation; he supported post-tribulation rapture theology. Newton later distanced himself from Darby who promoted a pre-tribulation rapture. Newton was later known for having taught heresy on the nature of Christ. Newton left the PB.

Field points out that many people who hold to a dispensationalist viewpoint may not even know Darby. Field writes, "On Darby's tombstone are the words 'unknown and well known.' Certainly 'well known' to his Lord, Darby's name is 'unknown' to many committed Christians today."<sup>49</sup> Darby would most likely not have it any other way. As he himself professed when he decided to resign from law school, "I owed myself entirely to [God]."<sup>50</sup> Darby was not interested in appeasing humans.

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<sup>47</sup> Field, *John Nelson*, 3570.

<sup>48</sup> Ezhumattoor, *A Portrait*, 792.

<sup>49</sup> Field, *John Nelson*, 3597.

<sup>50</sup> Christianity Today, "John Nelson Darby."

### Plymouth Brethren and the LCM

Sometime in his eighties, Darby traveled to a small inn. While there, he said to the Lord, “I still love you.” Lee mentions that this story had a tremendous impact on his life. Even until the end of Lee’s life, Lee referred to this story with much affection.<sup>51</sup> Darby’s pursuit of holiness and Christlike character left a strong footprint on the LCM. Lee admired and promoted Darby’s holiness and encouraged the LCM to follow him in his pursuit of a righteous character, even over the gifts and one’s Christian works for God.

When Watchman Nee started the LCM in China in the 1920s, a group of Exclusive Brethren believers came to visit Nee and his church. Although nowadays, the LCM embraces the values set forth by the PB, Nee, being aware of the splits that occurred in the past, was hesitant to receive them. Nee made it clear that his church would not accept the view of the Exclusive Brethren and he refused to receive funding from them. Under these conditions, Nee agreed to their visit but indeed refused their funding offer when it was presented.<sup>52</sup>

From this story, we can gather that the original motivations and intentions of the PB to build unity and promote purity shifted over the years. The Plymouth Brethren movement, which started in the 1820s, had a sole purpose of uniting Protestant churches to create a community that was holy and set apart for Christ and the Kingdom. Unfortunately, their vision one hundred years later did not yield all the lasting fruit they hoped it would. Introvigne says,

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<sup>51</sup> Witness Lee, *Life-Study of Psalms*, chap. 20, sec. 3 (1984), in Living Stream Ministry, <https://www.ministrybooks.org/SearchMinBooksDsp.cfm?id=084C0C6A25>.

<sup>52</sup> Witness Lee, *The History of the Church and the Local Churches*, chap. 5, sec. 4 (1973), in Living Stream Ministry, <https://www.ministrybooks.org/SearchMinBooksDsp.cfm?id=1CF2C02D4B>.

To this end, they gathered to break bread with all those willing to accept the Gospel of Christ and separate from evil. As so often in the history of Christianity, this utopian vision failed to unite the Protestant Church and instead gave rise to long-lasting new independent groups within Christianity.<sup>53</sup>

Despite Nee's refusal to submit to the control of EB in the early stage of their movement, the LCM still inherited a lot from PB practices. First, Darby and the PB's view on the gifts of the Spirit influenced the LCM. The LCM at one time tried to incorporate the Pentecostal movement into their own movement. However, just as Darby and the PB had been presented with this opportunity and closed their door to it, so also did the LCM. Instead, they focused on producing the fruits of the Spirit in persons.

Next, the LCM ended up following the same path as the PB by not intending to start a new denomination as its original purpose. While the PB failed to achieve their goal of deinstitutionalizing the Church, their efforts were not in vain. The LCM may be thought of nowadays as an example of renewal instigated by the PB in the early nineteenth century. In fact, witnessing the PB divide helped Nee to form his own critique for the betterment of the LCM. To correct what he perceived as an unbiblical error of division among the PB, Nee started a model of one city, one church. This meant there would be only one church per city, and it would act autonomously. The purpose was to promote unity. Unfortunately, this turned into one of the LCM's most controversial features.

Two other PB principles are ingrained in the function of the LCM even until today. That is, they followed the model of the PB to (1) encourage all Christians to be their own priesthood of believers by eliminating pastors in the church; and (2) *Sola*

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<sup>53</sup> Introvigne, *The Plymouth*, 99.

*Scriptura*: embracing the authority of Scripture, which meant several things. Both Nee and Lee valued giving a voice to all the members of the body of Christ. As a priesthood of believers, they embraced the PB's practice of eliminating clergy and hierarchal structures. Until today, the LCM does not ordain pastors to lead churches. Rather, they have elders who lead their church, and it functions in a similar form to that of the PB. All the members of the congregation take turns giving messages during meetings; together they comprise and build up the Church.

Second, embracing *Sola Scriptura* practically meant that the LCM put high value on memorizing, reading, and knowing the Scriptures. Theologically and theoretically, the Scriptures were considered infallible, believed in a literal sense, and used as a measuring stick for everything. In one of Nee's early publications, *The Christians*, which is a periodical that helps promote the LCM, Nee said,

We believe that the Bible is God's Word, word-for-word. We believe in a literal interpretation of all the major truths of the Bible. . . the Bible is our only standard. We are not afraid to preach the pure Word of the Bible, even if men oppose; but if it is not the Word of the Bible, we could never agree even if everyone approved of it.<sup>54</sup>

*Sola Scriptura* not only influenced the LCM but also many Protestant churches in America. The Pentecostal movement disregarded many of the doctrines of the Protestant church, but by no means would God want the church to deviate from *Sola Scriptura*. Concluding, the LCM would probably not be the same movement if it had not been for Darby and the PB. Although many critiques exist as to the lasting effect of the PB, one

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<sup>54</sup> Watchman Nee, *Collected Works of Watchman Nee, The (set 1) Vol. 07: The Christian (5)* (1992), in Living Stream Ministry, <https://www.ministrybooks.org/SearchMinBooksDsp.cfm?id=11EFE607C1>.

thing is certain: they influenced the LCM so much that the idea of paying the price to become holy as Christ is and was remains in the LCM's very fabric.

### **Application and Conclusion**

Constant tension in within the body of Christ nowadays lies in the fact that people who pursue and focus on obtaining holiness usually eventually extinguish the gifts of the Holy Spirit by neglect of or lack of belief in them. Conversely, people who operate powerfully in the gifts often fail to pursue or see the value of personal holiness. The Pentecostal movement started when members of the Holiness Movement, which originated from the Methodist church started by Wesley, began to experience manifestations of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The intriguing and ironic thing is that this occurred while pursuing holiness. Sadly, the Pentecostal movement, which birthed from the Holiness movement (which followed the PB), is no longer known for having a focus on holiness.

However, the birth of the Pentecostal movement proved God's desire to dispense His Spirit on the Church, regardless of whether the Church commits moral sin. Darby's view on the gifts of the Holy Spirit was not correct. In fact, in churches where the gifts of the Holy Spirit are promoted, we may see more lay members actively involved and participating as the priesthood than in traditional churches or churches who remove clergy positions. This is because these power-filled believers are encouraged to practice healing and prophesy everywhere they go. Existing as a priesthood of believers should be about liberating the power of each believer and equipping them with both the truth of the Bible and the power of the Holy Spirit.



Furthermore, God does ordain people to serve Him in distinct roles of leadership to help others become mature. For example, Paul was given the role of laying the foundation for God's Church (1 Cor. 3:9), but his role included being an example for others so that many builders of God together could continue to build God's house on the foundation he laid. His calling was never meant to replace the other members within the body of Christ. One of the reasons why the healing revival in the 1950s lost momentum was because some healing evangelists were supposed to teach others to do healings, but instead they only held tent meetings to draw crowds to themselves. According to Anna Rountree, author of *Heaven Awaits the Bride*, an angel told her the following in a prophetic experience:

No, only a few on earth were given the gift of healing in great measure. These believers were meant to train the many; instead, most of them erected tents and held the gift for themselves. The gift was used, but since they did not train others, it was corrupted and became a means of enriching themselves personally.<sup>55</sup>

Nowadays, ministries like Global Awakening and Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry focus exactly on this—moving in the gifts and equipping the body of believers to do the same. The challenge is not whether we can abolish the organizational structures within the body of Christ, but rather whether we can foster a dynamic relationship between clergy and laity. God never meant to take away clergy entirely. The correct way is neither to deny the gifted person nor the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Equipping the body of Christ to reach its full potential as the priesthood of God means teaching believers both to live holy lives and enabling them to become active in the gifts. Darby and other Cessationists who diminished the fire of the Holy Spirit did not

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<sup>55</sup> Anna Rountree, *Heaven Awaits the Bride: A Breathtaking Glimpse of Eternity* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2013), 675, Kindle.

realize that holiness is not our only goal. Our goal is to become holy vessels so that the Lord can pour out his anointing on and through us to help others. If we seek holiness for the sake of holiness, we will eventually become dry and die. Eventually, the PB's quest for holiness became their idol.

However, Darby's efforts in pursuing personal holiness and daring to challenge institutionalized religion is still valuable for today. His conviction that the body of Christ should unite with the life Christ and thus separate from the world is still relevant, especially for churches in the West. We should not take the extreme to not vote, for example (like Darby taught), but actively engage in transforming the world around us. We need to be both separate from the world but engage in it enough that we can stand on a hill and illuminate the dark around us.

The history of the Church and its movements may be likened to the waves of the sea. One wave or movement may not change the landscape of the shore. Many waves, however, can leave a lasting impact that produces a mature and complete Church. Subsequent movements of God could not have been complete without the faithful ones who went before them. Those before us like Darby did not receive the promise of the better things God has planned for the Church. This is so that only together with us will these things be made perfect (Heb. 11:39–40). We should, therefore, not ignore past movements of God. As George Santayana says, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."<sup>56</sup> The biggest thing we can learn from the PB is that it is

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<sup>56</sup> Nicholas Clairmont, "Those Who Do Not Learn History Are Doomed To Repeat It. Really?," Big Think, last modified July 31, 2013, <https://bigthink.com/the-proverbial-skeptic/those-who-do-not-learn-history-doomed-to-repeat-it-really>.

worth it to remain in the fight for purity and another wave of the Holy Spirit—this time with power too.

This chapter shows the connection of the history of the Plymouth Brethren movement with the Local Church Movement and the Pentecostal movement. Both Darby and the LCM failed to recognize God's heart to rekindle the flame of the Holy Spirit. Even though Darby had flaws and there existed controversies in his teachings, he is still an inspiration to many Christians today due to his holy, Christlike character and his love for Jesus Christ. Especially regarding LCM members, they applaud Darby's positive attributes, and he still serves as a role model for their congregation. Unfortunately, many LCM members are not aware of the dangers of Darby's cessationist viewpoint regarding the gifts. Many LCM members assume that Darby's position against the manifestations of the Holy Spirit is biblically accurate since he is so highly regarded.

Darby's influence on Protestant churches in the United States produced a similar effect. Darby is respected by many, but he contributed a lot to those who hold negative views toward the gifts of the Holy Spirit nowadays. By reviewing and analyzing the history of Darby's life and theology, one can make an informed decision about how to honor Darby for his commitment to Christ and biblical agenda. Likewise, one is also now more equipped to address and eliminate misunderstandings and inerrant teachings about the gifts of the Holy Spirit that still exist within the LCM because of Darby's influence.

The next chapter will provide a theological foundation for the prophetic gift. An interpretation from Pentecostal and Charismatic churches is shared to demonstrate the power and legitimacy of the gift of prophecy given by the Holy Spirit. Real life stories

from leaders in the modern prophetic movement are shared to display how the gift of prophecy powerfully reveals Christ and builds up the body of Christ.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

#### Introduction

Paul wrote nearly two thousand years ago, “For in it [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, ‘The one who is righteous will live by faith.’”<sup>1</sup> The notion of “justification and righteousness by faith”<sup>2</sup> is commonly taught to Christians today. For Martin Luther, however, this was a profound revelation that he received only when God’s Spirit granted him enlightenment on the verse.<sup>3</sup> This revelation brought forth reformation that changed the landscape of Christianity over the last five hundred years. When Agnes Ozman, a student at Charles F. Parham’s Bethel Bible School in Topeka, Kansas, received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues on January 1, 1901, it also shaped the future of Christianity.<sup>4</sup> Christians have not only rediscovered the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues, but have been gradually rediscovering the gift of prophecy.

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 1:17

<sup>2</sup> Joseph W. Tkach, “The Message of Jesus: Justification and Righteousness by Faith,” <https://www.gci.org/articles/justification-and-righteousness-by-faith/>.

<sup>3</sup> Herman Hanko, “Martin Luther and Justification by Faith,” *Standard Bearer* 65, no. 5 (December 1987): 1-3, <http://www.prca.org/resources/publications/articles/item/5020-martin-luther-and-justification-by-faith>.

<sup>4</sup> John Sherrill, *They Speak with Other Tongues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2012), 596, Kindle.

When Paul met believers in Ephesus, he asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit. Their answer echoes many Christian responses today. They had not heard that there is a Holy Spirit. When Paul laid his hands on them, “The Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied” (Acts 19:6). There are other biblical instances where prophesying followed the infilling of the Holy Spirit. For example, Zacharias prophesied after being filled with the Holy Spirit in Luke 1:67 and Peter prophesied after being filled with the Holy Spirit during Pentecost in Acts 2. Prophesying is one of the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit that apostle Paul mentions in chapter twelve of First Corinthians.

Larry Randolph, one of the leading prophets in the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, authored the book, *User Friendly Prophecy*. To reiterate the idea that the gift of prophecy is a product of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, he says,

First, there is a requirement that we must fulfill, which is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Second, it appears that once New Testament believers have received the infilling of the Spirit, the gift of prophecy lies resident within them. As a result of this abiding anointing, we have the capacity to prophesy when and where the Spirit desires us to speak.<sup>5</sup>

Despite Randolph’s opinion, there is a lot of debate between traditional Evangelical churches and Pentecostal and Charismatic churches about the baptism of the Holy Spirit and its accompanying signs.

While the Pentecostal movement has grown tremendously in the last one hundred years, many Evangelical churches still do not believe these gifts are available today. According to a report from 2011, there are approximately 285 million Evangelical

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<sup>5</sup> Larry Randolph, *User Friendly Prophecy* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 1998), 29.

Christians compared to 584 million Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians worldwide.<sup>6</sup> Another report from the *Annuario Pontificio* (Pontifical Yearbook) states that the number of Catholics in 2017 was 1.3 billion.<sup>7</sup> A report from 2013 stated that over 160 million Catholics are Pentecostal or Charismatic.<sup>8</sup> If all of this data is correct, that means there is an incredibly large number of believers (millions) who believe the gift of prophecy is still available today.

Despite these numbers, the Christian population in the US dropped from 78.4% in 2007 to 70.6% in 2014. Amidst this decline, Protestant Christians decreased from 51.3% of the US population in 2007 to 46.5% in 2014.<sup>9</sup> One report from *Pew Research Center* states, “In 2007, there were an estimated 41 million mainline Protestant adults in the United States. As of 2014, there are roughly 36 million.”<sup>10</sup> Other numbers reveal that Pentecostal and Charismatic populations reached 76 million in the United States in 2010.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Pew Research Center, “Global Christianity – A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World’s Christian Population,” Pew Research Center on Religion and Public Life, December 19, 2011, <https://www.pewforum.org/2011/12/19/global-christianity-exec/>.

<sup>7</sup> Cindy Wooden, “Global Catholic population tops 1.28 billion; half are in 10 countries,” *National Catholic Reporter*, April 8, 2017, <https://www.ncronline.org/news/world/global-catholic-population-tops-128-billion-half-are-10-countries>.

<sup>8</sup> Alessandra Nucci, “The Charismatic Renewal and the Catholic Church,” *The Catholic World Report*, May 18, 2013, <https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2013/05/18/the-charismatic-renewal-and-the-catholic-church/>.

<sup>9</sup> Pew Research Center, “America’s Changing Religious Landscape,” Pew Research Center on Religion and Public Life, May 12, 2015, <https://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>.

<sup>10</sup> Pew Research Center, “America’s Changing Religious Landscape,” Pew Research Center on Religion and Public Life, May 12, 2015, <https://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>.

While the total number of American Christians decreased from 2010 to 2014, these statistics still demonstrate there is an increasing community of believers who (at least) believe in, if not practice, the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These numbers show that it is valuable to study the role of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially the revelatory gift of prophecy, because it relates to the growth of Christianity worldwide. This chapter will examine the gift of prophecy from a theological and Pentecostal perspective. It will consider the history and growth of the prophetic gift into today and the implications of using it nowadays.

### **Has the Gift of Prophecy Ceased?**

The belief that the gift of prophecy has ceased may come from the interpretation of the following passage in 1 Corinthians 13:8–10,

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end.

Many speculations have been made on the termination of the gifts because Paul states that prophecy is imperfect and will cease when the perfect comes. Some theologians and pastors have interpreted the completion of the Bible canon as the complete. They, therefore, reason there is no longer a need for the revelatory gift of prophecy or even apostleship.

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<sup>11</sup> T.M. Johnson, “The Global Demographics of the Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal,” *Soc* 46 (2009): 480.  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/225417423\\_The\\_Global\\_Demographics\\_of\\_the\\_Pentecostal\\_and\\_Charismatic\\_Renewal](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/225417423_The_Global_Demographics_of_the_Pentecostal_and_Charismatic_Renewal).



Thomas R. Schreiner, a New Testament scholar from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, is a prime example of someone who believes this. He writes in his article, “Why I Am a Cessationist,” “The early churches didn’t have the complete canon of Scripture for some time, and hence an authoritative and infallible prophetic ministry was needed to lay the foundation for the church in those early days.”<sup>12</sup> He continues to say,

Over the years I’ve become convinced that some of the so-called charismatic gifts are no longer given and that they aren’t a regular feature of life in the church. I am thinking particularly of the gifts of apostleship, prophecy, tongues, healing, and miracles (and perhaps discernment of spirits).<sup>13</sup>

Other scholars also believe the gift of prophecy ceased, but they disagree that the completion of the Bible is the perfect that Paul refers to. For example, Roger Ellsworth believes the perfect refers to the time when Christians go to heaven. For Ellsworth, Scripture is the continuation of prophecy. He states,

Even though the gift of prophecy ceased, we have in Scripture the essential truths God delivered through the prophets. So, the gift of prophecy can be said to continue in Scripture. When the perfect age comes, we shall no longer need the testimony of Scripture to guide us.<sup>14</sup>

Ellsworth and Schreiner make statements that are partially true, but their speculations fail to consider what Paul teaches in other verses which imply that the community of believers need to grow in faith to prophesy and reach the full stature of Christ. They also fall short of considering that Paul teaches believers to pursue the gift of

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<sup>12</sup> Thomas Schreiner, “Why I Am a Cessationist,” The Gospel Coalition, January 22, 2014, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/cessationist/>.

<sup>13</sup> Schreiner, “Why I Am a Cessationist,” <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/cessationist/>.

<sup>14</sup> Roger Ellsworth, *Strengthening Christ’s Church: The Message of 1 Corinthians* (Darlington, UK: Evangelical Press, 1995), 217.

prophecy earnestly (1 Cor. 14:1) and instructs them to not forbid speaking in tongues (1 Cor. 14:39). To understand the cause of cessationist interpretations, these verses should be examined based on a few things.

First, there are different forms of prophesying in the Old Testament and New Testament. In the OT, prophets spoke when the Holy Spirit visited and came upon them. In the NT, it is the Holy Spirit who lives in the believer that produces a prophetic message. Both are from the Spirit of God, but the means of receiving the message changed.

In the OT, only a small group of people were considered prophets. In the NT, this gift is diffused to all believers in Christ. Mike Bickle, a leading figure in the modern prophetic movement, writes in his book, *Growing in the Prophetic*,

Luther also taught the doctrine of *private judgement*, which is the principle that every person can hear God and interpret the Scriptures for himself. That was another radical idea for the sixteenth century. There are parallels in Luther's emphasis on the priesthood of all believers to the New Testament understanding of prophetic ministry. Every Christian can hear from God, exercise discernment, and be led by the Holy Spirit. Ministry that was exclusive in the Old Testament (prophet and priest) is now diffused and common in the New.<sup>15</sup>

Historically, some groups like the Montanists violated Scriptures in their practices.<sup>16</sup> These mistakes made by adherents of New Prophecy (as Montanism was called) caused many Christians to question the legitimacy of this gift. This afforded

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<sup>15</sup> Mike Bickle, *Growing in the Prophetic* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 1996), 56.

<sup>16</sup> Montanus and his two prophetesses, Priscilla and Maximilla, were accused of heresy for several reasons including: conveying prophecy in an ecstatic manner with convulsing which was outside of the Orthodox pattern passed down to the church; unfulfilled or false prophecies; question in matters of accountability in leadership and character; and false claims like that of Maximilla who prophesied that no prophet would arise after her. F. David Farnell, "The Montanist Crisis: A Key to Refuting Third-Wave Concepts of NT Prophecy," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 14, no.2 (Fall 2003): 235-262, <https://tms.edu/msj/msj14.2.4/>.

scholars the opportunity to raise concerns about whether prophecy may be threatening the authentic status of the Scriptures and or leading the church astray. For example, David F. Farnell uses the Montanists and their erroneous statement on prophecy—that there are no more prophets after them—to refute Wayne Grudem’s (a former Cessationist influenced by the Third Wave Signs and Wonders Movement) case that Evangelical churches today should practice prophecy as people do in Pentecostal church settings. What Farnell likely does not realize is that he is also causing harm by using the error of others to refute a Christian publicly and thus cause more confusion around the topic of prophecy. The question of why God gave mankind both the Scriptures and prophecy needs to be answered.

There are sixteen literary prophets. Five OT books were written by Major Prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. The twelve books of the Minor Prophets include Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The writings of OT Prophets are recognized as parts of the Bible. However, during OT times there were prophets who wrote the Bible and there were also prophets whose messages are not recorded or regarded as such.

Moses and Samuel are also considered prophets and may be the authors of the Torah and 1 and 2 Samuel. Gad, Nathan, Elijah, Elisha, and Huldah (the prophetess in 2 Kings 22:14), and possibly John the Baptist are the non-literary prophets in the OT. Interestingly, Elijah is regarded as one of the greater prophets of the Bible, but he did not write any part of the Bible as far as we know.

In the NT, apostles and prophets are mentioned, but it was the apostles and other persons who wrote NT Scripture; none of the prophets mentioned in the NT wrote any

part of the Bible as we know. Agabus, Anna the Prophetess, Silas, and Simeon (Gospel of Luke) are some of the prophets mentioned in the NT. There are also the four daughters of Philip who had a gift of prophecy (Acts 21:9). If there were so many prophets who were not called to write the Scriptures, what was the function of these prophets? The NT role and function of a prophet was to carry and speak God's messages. This is even a little different than the role of OT prophets who periodically also wrote.

God often used prophets in the OT to criticize kings and to correct the Israelites and their enemies. However, in the NT, it says "those who prophesy speak to other people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation" (1 Cor. 14:3). Jon Mark Ruthven offers an illustration of this. He relates Scripture to the role of the Constitution of America. Ruthven states,

Saying that there can be no more direct, immediate "words from the Lord" to someone today because they would add to Scripture is liking saying that Congress can't pass any more laws today because that would add to the Constitution! Ideally, both the Scripture and the Constitution guide and restrict their subsequent expressions (or they at least should). Prophecy and revelation are both like new laws in that they should appropriate application of the original documents into real life. Neither the Scriptures nor the Constitution are changed by these applications that they themselves authorize. Just as the Constitution expects the enactment of new laws that apply constitutional principles, so Scripture urges preaching, prophecy, and miracles as applications of the intention and message of the Scripture.<sup>17</sup>

The Constitution is our manual and the new laws passed by Congress are the application of the manual to our real lives. The Constitution is like the Bible in that both are final versions, closed to change. They serve as authorities, offering guiding principles. Although the Constitution sets forth the principles of what a US citizen can or cannot do,

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<sup>17</sup> Jon Mark Ruthven, *What's Wrong with Protestant Theology? Tradition vs. Biblical Emphasis* (Tulsa, OK: Word & Spirit Press, 2003), 42.

this does not take away the ability of Congress to make new laws. The prophet is someone who knows the Bible well and knows God intimately, just as a congressman knows the Constitution and works to abide by it. Since the function of prophecy and Scripture are different, they cannot be expected to replicate or replace one another. In fact, it would be imprudent if congressmen were eliminated simply because the Constitution existed. In the same way, one would not expect prophecy to cease solely because the Bible exists.

God can and will speak today, and He speaks through many different forms. For example, when Bible teachers interpret the Bible, they may teach or add words out of their own inspiration. This inspiration is prophetic and, therefore, these teachers are speaking as a prophetic voice whether they realize it or not. This kind of inspiration helps Christians apply the Scriptures to their daily lives. Christians receive encouragement when they listen to such anointed preachers.

Prophecy can also be a format of Bible interpretation like counseling or preaching. Since prophecy has a foretelling aspect and carries divine power, it can influence, change, correct, or encourage a person's life. Wayne Grudem writes about a prophetic experience related to 1 Corinthians 14:25. He shares,

I heard a report of this happening in a clearly non-charismatic Baptist church in America: A missionary speaker paused in the middle of his message and said something like this: "I didn't plan to say this, but it seems the Lord is indicating that someone in this church has just walked out on his wife and family. If that is so, let me tell you that God wants you to return to them and learn to follow God's pattern for family life." The missionary did not know it, but in the unlit balcony sat a man who had entered the church for the first time just moments before. The

description fit him exactly, and he made himself known, acknowledged his sin, and began to seek after God.<sup>18</sup>

This example of prophecy, in the form of a word of knowledge, demonstrates the inspiration believers can receive to share messages with others on behalf of God. In his writing, Witness Lee also told a story about the famous Chinese Pentecostal evangelist John Sung, who died in 1944. In a meeting, John Sung pointed to a woman and called her someone's concubine (without knowing it in advance). The woman became angry for being exposed in public, but she was later convicted by the Holy Spirit because it was true. She repented and received the Lord.<sup>19</sup>

Lee also shares examples of his own prophetic words that brought fruits of repentance. On one occasion, Lee pointed to someone in a meeting and disclosed that he was stealing chalk from school and even drawing circles on the ground with it. This knowledge was not known in advance. The young man ended up confessing his sin. On another occasion, Lee pointed to a woman and revealed that she made her husband work many hours to support her habit of buying high heel shoes. This woman also converted after receiving this word.<sup>20</sup> Yet again, in another ministry moment, Lee pointed to a woman and declared that a demon was using her to stop people from getting saved and

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<sup>18</sup> Wayne. A. Grudem, "Why Christians Can Still Prophecy," *Christianity Today* 32, no. 13 (September 1988): 34, <http://www.waynegrudem.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Why-Christians-Can-Still-Prophecy3.pdf/>.

<sup>19</sup> Witness Lee, *A Living of Mutual Abiding with the Lord in Spirit*, chap. 5, sec. 1 (1983), in Living Stream Ministry, <https://www.ministrybooks.org/books.cfm?cid=3D>.

<sup>20</sup> Witness Lee, *The Fullness of God*, chap.6, sec.4 (1985) in Living Stream Ministry, <https://www.ministrybooks.org/books.cfm?n>.

even preventing her mother from receiving Christ. Both the mother and daughter were saved after this word was given.<sup>21</sup>

Lee was never considered a prophet. He also never claimed that he had prophetic gifts. Yet, in Charismatic circles, these examples would be considered prophetic words spoken through him by the Holy Spirit during his preaching. Many preachers have similar experiences. Although such prophetic messages will never add to the Bible or replace it, they should not be discounted as ungodly.

### **Prophesying: Forthtelling or Foretelling?**

For Lee, to prophesy is not to predict the future. When Lee visited Pentecostal churches in the United States, he did not think it was much different from the early Pentecostal movement he experienced in China. People often prophesied saying “thus says the Lord,” but many prophecies including the great earthquake of Los Angeles, given in 1960, never came true.<sup>22</sup> According to Lee, Paul means something different when he refers to prophesying. He says,

This is what Paul calls prophesying. It is not foretelling but “forth-telling,” speaking for God and speaking forth Christ from the Word of God for the edification of the believers and for the building up of the church (1 Cor. 14:3-4). This “all-saints-prophesying” meeting provides the brothers and sisters with the teaching, revelation, consolation, and exhortation that they need as the one church in their locality, and these things are ministered not by a few gifted ones but by all the members mutually (1 Cor. 14:1, 31).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Watchman Nee, *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee (Set 2) Vol. 42: Conferences, Messages, and Fellowship (2)*, chap. 28, sec. 2 (1993) in Living Stream Ministry, <https://www.ministrybooks.org/SearchMinBooksDtl.cfm?so=C&id=10F8EA>.

<sup>22</sup> Witness Lee, *The Practice of Prophesying*, chap. 1, sec. 1 (1990) in Living Stream Ministry, <https://www.ministrybooks.org/SearchMinBooksDsp.cfm?id=33E313DFCF>.

<sup>23</sup> Witness Lee, *Our Meetings* (tract), chap. 1, sec. 1 in Living Stream Ministry, <https://www.ministrybooks.org/books.cfm?id=1EFAEB>.

Lee recalls his experience with Watchmen Nee and concludes: “We have come to the clear understanding that prophesying in 1 Corinthians 14 does not denote foretelling or predicting. To prophesy in the sense of 1 Corinthians 14 denotes to speak for God and Christ and speak forth God and Christ.”<sup>24</sup> Lee explains his point with a couple examples,

Likewise, a minister of the Word may minister Christ to people but not dispense Christ into them. A nursing mother, on the other hand, not only ministers food to her babies but dispenses it into them. Babies sometimes do not want to eat the food given to them, but mothers have a way to compel them to eat. We must learn not only to speak for God and Christ but also to speak forth God and Christ. Moreover, in speaking forth God and Christ, we should not only minister God and Christ to people but also dispense into them what we are speaking forth. Experienced doctors are skilled at dispensing medicine to their patients.<sup>25</sup>

Even though Lee acknowledges the foretelling aspect of prophecy, he does not consider it the main function of prophecy according to Paul’s writings. Grudem gives prophecy a new definition to cope with the controversial issues that arose with the predicting and foretelling that occurred in the Pentecostal movement. These foretelling prophecies often seemed incorrect and never came to pass. He says,

An examination of the New Testament teaching on this gift will show that it should be defined not as “predicting the future,” or “proclaiming a word from the Lord,” or “powerful preaching”—but rather as “telling something that God has spontaneously brought to mind.”<sup>26</sup>

Grudem also sees a problem with predicting things using the words “thus says the Lord,” since it is not guaranteed that the word is 100% from the Lord. Some prophecies may contain a mixture of revelation or inspiration from God and emotions and thoughts of the one delivering it. Grudem points out that in the NT, the apostles are the counterpart

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<sup>24</sup> Lee, *The Practice of Prophesying*, chap. 1, sec. 1.

<sup>25</sup> Lee, *The Practice of Prophesying*, chap. 1, sec. 1.

<sup>26</sup> Grudem, “Why Christians,” 29–30.



of OT prophets. He tries to lower the expectation of prophecy in the NT as something of less authority than the apostles. Yet, Grudem still encourages Evangelical churches to remain open to the practice of prophesying. Grudem says,

Prophecy in the New Testament is not merely “predicting the future.” There were some predictions (Acts 11:28; 21:11), but there was also the disclosure of sins (1 Cor. 14:25). In fact, anything that edified could have been included, for Paul says, “He who prophesies speaks to men for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation” (1 Cor. 14:3). Here is another indication of the value of prophecy: It could speak to the needs of people’s hearts in a spontaneous, direct way.<sup>27</sup>

Both Lee and Grudem soften the predicting aspect of prophesying. Grudem, though, had more participation in the late Pentecostal movement while Lee mostly rejected it. John W. Ritenbaugh argues that the prophets both forthtold and foretold, though mainly they forthtold. He says,

They both forthtell - that is, proclaim a message truthfully, clearly, and authoritatively to those for whom it is intended - and they will on occasion, but not always, foretell - that is, predict events before they take place.<sup>28</sup>

Nee calls this forthtelling prophecy “the deep calls to deep” (Ps. 42:7).<sup>29</sup> This means to speak what one has received or processed in their spirits to the spiritual or inner persons of other people. Bickle, on the other hand, does not agree with Grudem or Lee, but he praises Grudem’s effort in promoting the understanding of the prophetic gifts among the Evangelical churches. Bickle says,

I find Grudem helpful but not adequate. His definition of prophecy is “speaking merely human words to report something God brings to mind.” The definition

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<sup>27</sup> Grudem, “Why Christians,” 34.

<sup>28</sup> John W. Ritenbaugh, “Elijah and John the Baptist,” *Bible Study Tools: Forerunner Commentary*, January 2004, <https://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Library.sr/CT/PERSONAL/k/868/Elijah-John-Baptist.htm>.

<sup>29</sup> Watchman Nee, *Deep Calls unto Deep*, chap. 1, sec. 5 in Living Stream Ministry, <https://www.ministrybooks.org/SearchMinBooksDsp.cfm?id=0B06C811D6>.

allows for a type of prophetic utterance that is possible for every believer, and rightfully so. He also acknowledges that in the New Testament some people ministered more regularly in prophecy and were called “prophets” (Agabus in Acts 11, 21; Philip’s daughters in Acts 21; Barnabas in Acts 13:1). Gruden does not acknowledge that there was an “office” of prophet. However, Pentecostals and Charismatics would disagree with him. Paul says that apostles and prophets will continue to function TILL or until the church is fully mature. Surely, TILL this occurs, we need apostles and prophets to equip the saints for the work of ministry.<sup>30</sup>

Bickle teaches there are four levels of prophetic gifts which include simple prophecy, prophetic gifting, prophetic ministry, and prophetic office. The first level is for every believer. Each can listen to the Holy Spirit and prophesy. The second level characterizes someone who regularly hears from the Holy Spirit through impressions, dreams, and visions. The third level refers to someone who is recognized and commissioned by the local church to have regular prophetic ministry. The fourth level denotes a believer who occupies the office of a prophet like the prophets in the OT. Bickle argues that even the prophecies of level four persons may not be 100% correct like the prophets in the OT, but these persons still need to be taken seriously.<sup>31</sup>

Bickle listed his personal experience of how Bob Jones, a leading prophetic figure associated with Bickle and their prophetic practices, predicted future events several times and they came to pass. One of these prophecies by Jones was a three-month drought accompanied by only one day of rain which occurred on May 28, 1983, in Kansas City.<sup>32</sup>

In an abstract titled, “Forthtelling, Not Foretelling,” Steven L. McKenzie offers another perspective. Like that of Lee, he argues that Christian readers typically

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<sup>30</sup> Bickle, *Growing in the Prophetic*, 38.

<sup>31</sup> Bickle, *Growing in the Prophetic*, 39–41.

<sup>32</sup> Bickle, *Growing in the Prophetic*, 17.

misunderstand prophecy in the Bible because they assume that its primary intent is to foretell the future. He writes,

The intent of the genre of prophecy in the Hebrew Bible was not primarily to predict the future but rather address specific social, political and religious circumstances in ancient Israel and Judah. This means that there is no prediction of Christ in the Hebrew Bible. The writers of the New Testament and other Christian literature reinterpreted or reapplied the concept of Hebrew prophecy. This is not to disparage later Christian authors, but to point out that they were participating in a long-standing process of reinterpretation that goes back to the prophetic books themselves.<sup>33</sup>

McKenzie's statement is exaggerated because the OT does contain the aspect of predicting regardless of the author's intention, especially regarding foreshadowing the coming of the Christ. His statement does, however, support that prophecy has different purposes in the OT versus the NT. Randolph's definition of prophesying broadens the matter. He says, "I tell them that the Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible defines the Greek words *propheteis* and *prophetcuo* (prophecy and prophesy) in this manner: 'to predict, to foretell, to speak under inspiration.'"<sup>34</sup>

Randolph points out that the Hebrew word for prophecy is *nabi*. This word means "bubble up" and it is used over three hundred times in the OT.<sup>35</sup> Randolph is not shy at all in saying that prophesying contains the aspect of foretelling. He continues, "Undoubtedly, there are many other valid references that accurately define the meaning

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<sup>33</sup> Steven L. McKenzie, *How to Read the Bible: History, Prophecy, Literature—Why Modern Readers Need to Know the Difference, and What It Means for Faith Today* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011), chap. 3, <https://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195161496.001.0001/acprof-9780195161496-chapter-3>.

<sup>34</sup> Randolph, *User Friendly Prophecy*, 28.

<sup>35</sup> Randolph, *User Friendly Prophecy*, 28.

of prophecy. Yet, all of these definitions can be reduced to one simple thought: *Prophecy is God speaking through man.*”<sup>36</sup>

In the same book, Randolph records a story of how God gave him a prophetic dream instructing him to go to New York City. There were few details in the instructions, but he recalled seeing a white car in his vision. Randolph obeyed and left Arkansas. Although he had no money, he trusted that God would speak to him prophetically. In a coffeehouse, he saw a depressed-looking man and God told Randolph that he was suicidal. Randolph spoke with the man and found out it was true. The man had recently gone bankrupt, and his wife and kids left him. While driving from Wisconsin to New York on his most recent business trip, the depressed man heard someone preach the gospel on the radio. Before acting on his decision to take his life, he prayed that God would send someone to speak to him in New York if he were real.

Randolph spoke to this man prophetically that day telling him that God brought a country boy from Arkansas to New York to tell him God loves him and that he should not commit suicide. The man received the Lord and was so touched that he insisted to pay for Randolph’s hotel charges and drive him back to the airport. Upon leaving, Randolph realized the man’s car was exactly the white car he saw in the vision before he came to New York.<sup>37</sup> Stories like this one can be found in the lives of many modern-day prophets or ordinary people who practice prophesying.

Another prominent prophet in the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement is James Goll. He writes in his book, *The Seer*, that prophets in modern prophetic streams

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<sup>36</sup> Randolph, *User Friendly Prophecy*, 28.

<sup>37</sup> Randolph, *User Friendly Prophecy*, 6–10.

have two functions and are characterized in two groups. Like Randolph said, one group are nabiyy' prophets who speak on behalf of God like water bubbling up. They may not see many visions. The other group are seer prophets. Goll, like Randolph, also points out that the words *nabiyy'* or *nabi* were used over 300 times to refer to prophets like Abraham and others. The Hebrew words for "seer" are *ra'ah* and *chozeh*. *Ra'ah* means "to see" and *chozeh* means "a beholder in vision." The seer prophets often see visions or have dreams. In 1 Chronicles 29:29, each of these three words are mentioned. That is, Samuel the seer (*ra'ah*), Nathan the prophet (*nabiyy'*) and Gad the seer (*chozeh*).<sup>38</sup> Goll continues,

One of the differences is that, whereas the prophetic word of a nabiyy' is often spontaneous and activated by faith, that of a ra'ah or chozeh seer is more dependent upon the manifested presence of God. Many seers will see something beforehand.<sup>39</sup>

Goll states that these two prophetic functions reappeared about fifty years ago in the Pentecostal movement. Jones represents the seer prophet and Bill Hamon, founder of Christian International Ministries, represents the nabiyy' prophet.<sup>40</sup> These examples support the argument that prophecy consists of both forthtelling and foretelling qualities.

### **Prophecy in the Modern Charismatic Movement**

The gift of prophecy was evident in the beginning of the Pentecostal movement, and it was revived in the Latter Rain Movement. In the healing revivals of the 1950s, Kenneth E. Hagin and others furthered prophesying practices. Hamon says,

Two streams of restoration came forth in 1947-48. One was the Latter Rain Movement, which restored the practice of...the laying on of hands...as well as

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<sup>38</sup> James Goll, *The Seer*, exp. ed. (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 2012), 23-30.

<sup>39</sup> Goll, *The Seer*, 31.

<sup>40</sup> Goll, *The Seer*, 31-32.

extensive congregational prophesying... They emphasized moving into the prophetic realm by faith, grace and gifting. The other restoration stream was what was termed “The Healing and Deliverance Movement.” Their restorational emphasis was laying on of hands for healing, deliverance and world evangelism by preaching with signs and wonders. Both were of God and were valid ministries.<sup>41</sup>

David Pytches writes in his book, *Some Said it Thundered: A Personal Encounter with the Kansas City Prophets*, that the prophetic practice in the Latter Rain Movement contains some practices that are questionable. He says,

The Latter Rain Movement, whatever its merits, was greatly undermined by such unbridled prophetic utterances. Men and women were prophesying all kinds of words over people but were not operating under authority. Their prophecies went untested. God is not the author of such confusion.<sup>42</sup>

Although Pytches believes the gift of prophecy was abused during this time, the gift of prophecy was still more evident in operation than it had been. It was even further recovered through the Kansas prophetic movement of the 1980s.<sup>43</sup>

Jones was one of the leading prophets in this movement and another important figure was Bickle. Bickle was just a young pastor and not known by many people until Jones prophesied to him that he would lead a 24-hour worship center which later became true. This is the International House of Prayer (IHOP). According to IHOP’s website,

When the two first met, Bob Jones told Mike Bickle that the Lord would use him to pastor a young adult movement of singers and musicians who would pray for Israel and have strong ties to Asia. Mike initially didn’t believe Bob, but two weeks later it was confirmed to him that Bob, in fact, had heard from the Lord.

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<sup>41</sup> Ern Baxter, *Prophetic Seminar* (teaching notes) (Mobile AL: Integrity Communications, 1984), quoted in Jim W. Goll, *The Seer: The Prophetic Power of Visions, Dreams, and Open Heavens*, exp. ed. (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, Inc., 2012).

<sup>42</sup> David Pytches, *Some Said It Thundered: A Personal Encounter with the Kansas City Prophets* (Nashville, TN: Oliver-Nelson Books, 1991), 13.

<sup>43</sup> Mike Bickle, “The History of IHOPKC,” International House of Prayer Kansas City, <https://www.ihopkc.org/propheticichistory/>.

Bob, who passed away in 2014, played a pivotal role in encouraging Mike during the early years of the movement and was a great friend to IHOPKC.<sup>44</sup>

IHOP is now famous worldwide, and it has influenced many Christians to start other 24-hour worship and prayer centers around the world. Through a connection to IHOP in its early days, many prophets gathered around and visited Kansas City. This group of persons initiated what was later called the Kansas prophetic movement.<sup>45</sup> Michael G. Maudlin, a reporter from *Christianity Today*, recorded some controversies aroused by this movement. He visited Kansas City and authored a detailed story in 1991. He says,

These men—pastor Mike Bickle, and prophets such as Bob Jones, John Paul Jackson, and Paul Cain—and their church, Kansas City Fellowship (KCF), are creating a stir in charismatic circles. They claim that the prophetic gift should be restored in the church, that prophecy is a natural, biblical means for God to speak to his people, and that (here’s the apocalyptic part) this increased prophetic activity is a sign of the emergence of the last-days’ victorious church. They practice what they preach.<sup>46</sup>

Even until this day Bickle and others strongly believe God is using them to restore the prophetic gift in the worldwide church and usher in the Apocalypse. Though Jones gave accurate prophecies regarding IHOP and many other things, he remained a controversial figure due to some unfulfilled prophecies.<sup>47</sup> Pytches also mentions Paul

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<sup>44</sup> Bickle, “The History,” 1.

<sup>45</sup> Mike Bickle, interview by Ask Mike Bickle, “Who are the Kansas City Prophets and are you one of them?” (video), January 9, 2015, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SD\\_fa\\_hdazI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SD_fa_hdazI).

<sup>46</sup> Michael G. Maudlin, “Seers in the Heartland, Hot on the Trail of the Kansas City Prophets,” *Christianity Today*, January 14, 1991, 18, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1991/january-14/seers-in-heartland-hot-on-trail-of-kansas-city-prophets.html>.

<sup>47</sup> Jones prophesied in 1997 that there would be great earthquakes and six great cities would be destroyed. Among them were Chicago, Morgan City, St. Louis and Memphis. It was stated, “Memphis will become a lake.” Ben, “Bob Jones’ Earthquake Prophecies,” IHOP Network, August 9, 2013, <http://www.ihopnetwork.com/index.php/2013/08/09/bob-jones-earthquake-prophecies>.

Cain who was known as a gifted person with words of knowledge. Cain gave up marriage to live a celibate life and have intimate fellowship with only Jesus.<sup>48</sup> His gifts were extraordinary, but it was later revealed that he struggled with a homosexual relationship and alcoholic abuse. Cain first denied these things, but he later acknowledged them with an apologetic letter.<sup>49</sup>

Rick Joyner, a famous Pentecostal prophet, compared Paul Cain to Samson of the Bible. Samson was a person with moral failure yet gifted and used greatly by God.<sup>50</sup> Due to inaccuracies or moral failures of persons who operated in prophetic giftings, some emerged from these movements with a distaste for the prophetic gift. Many preferred denying the prophetic gift instead of testing the prophecies and the persons delivering them. This kind of rationale marked the gift of prophecy as something to be cautious of rather than something natural to believers.

### **The Biblical Way to Prophecy**

The fundamental difference between OT and NT prophecy is that the Holy Spirit no longer possesses a person from the outside to prophesy, but rather abides on the inside. The modern-day prophet Graham Cooke labels this difference as “visitational” versus “habitational.”<sup>51</sup> Cooke explains in one of his Facebook posts,

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<sup>48</sup> Pytches, *Some Said*, 19–44.

<sup>49</sup> Paul Cain, “A Letter of Confession,” *Pain Cain Ministries*, 2005, <https://web.archive.org/web/20050225053035/http://www.paulcain.org/news.html>.

<sup>50</sup> Rick Joyner, “Paul Cain Story #RicksRant,” (YOUTUBE video), *MorningStar Ministries*, February 19, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2qErzorYs68>.

<sup>51</sup> Teagan Russell, “Prophecy Is For Everyone, Says Graham Cooke,” *Eternity News*, April 6, 2017, <https://www.eternitynews.com.au/in-depth/prophecy-is-for-everyone-says-graham-cooke/>.



The tragedy for many churchgoers today is that we are trying to live in Christ with a visitational mindset, and we actually have people preaching that if you sin, God lifts off you. Not possible, because He is living inside you! Jesus said, “We will make our abode with you,” so we are changing the rules. We are changing everything from a visitational encounter to a habitational one. That means you take God with you EVERYWHERE.<sup>52</sup>

In the OT, when the Spirit of God fell upon a prophet, there was no room for mistakes. The Holy Spirit spoke clearly and directly. If a prophecy did not come true, the person who prophesied would be considered a false prophet. Many kinds of false prophets existed in the OT and were commanded to be stoned or removed from among the people (Deut. 13:1–18). Mostly, these false prophets were those who acted in pretense. They claimed to serve God, but their hearts were filled with malice or pride. That is, they either spoke before consulting with the Lord, spoke arrogantly from their own agenda, or did not know God and tried to purposely lead Israel astray.<sup>53</sup> Both Jesus and Paul warn believers to be aware of such false prophets nowadays.<sup>54</sup>

Now that the Holy Spirit dwells in the believer, God’s Spirit may speak clearly and directly to that person, but it depends on the Christian to hear and discern what God is saying. Eager and sincere believers of Christ who move in the gift of prophecy are different than those who claim to operate in the office of a prophet but purposely try to deceive the flock. Often, one may hear something from God but not listen to it in their

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<sup>52</sup> Graham Cooke, Facebook post, May 15, 2013, <https://www.facebook.com/GrahamCookeBBH/posts/10151450945723918/>.

<sup>53</sup> Bob Deffinbaugh, “False Prophets, Part 1,” *Bible.org*, August 24, 2004, <https://bible.org/seriespage/3-false-prophets-part-i#:~:text=In%20the%20Old%20Testament%2C%20we%20find%20prophets%20in,led%20by%20>.

<sup>54</sup> Matt. 7:15, 24:24; 2 Pet. 2:1–3; John 4:1.

mind nor receive it into their heart. To get the attention of others or make communication successful, one must get in touch with their spiritual man. Nee says,

As we extend ourselves deeper and take root downward, we will discover that “deep calls unto deep.” When we can bring forth riches from the depths of our inner life, we will find that other lives will be deeply affected. The minute our inner being is touched, others will receive help and be enlightened. They will know that there is something beyond their knowledge. When deep touches deep, deep will respond to deep. If our life has no depth, our superficial work will only affect other lives superficially. We repeat yet again—only “deep calls unto deep.”<sup>55</sup>

Since Lee was greatly influenced by Nee, he also stresses ministering from Spirit to Spirit. He even coined the term “exercising the [human] spirit.”<sup>56</sup> Lee and Nee stressed the importance of activating the spirit-man within a person to stay connected with God. Some ways of doing this include calling on the name of the Lord repetitively or mediating on the Word of God (Pray reading). When one ministers out of their spirit, there will be less contamination from their soul. The Word of God is like a pure spring of water which flows directly from the Spirit of God, but believers must be diligent to keep clear channels. The British author and teacher, Bruce Yocum, says, “Prophecy can be impure — our own thoughts or ideas can get mixed into the message we receive — whether we receive all the words directly or only receive a sense of the message.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Watchman Nee, *Deep Calls unto Deep*, chap. 1, sec. 5 in Living Stream Ministry, <https://www.ministrybooks.org/SearchMinBooksDsp.cfm?id=0B06C811D6>.

<sup>56</sup> Witness Lee, *Lessons on Prayer*, chap. 5 (1981) in Living Stream Ministry, <https://www.ministrybooks.org/books.cfm>.

<sup>57</sup> Bruce Yocum, *Prophecy: Exercising the Prophetic Gifts of the Spirit in the Church Today* (Cincinnati, OH: Servant Books, 1993), 79.

Grudem has influenced many Pentecostals and Charismatics with his writing. He explains that Paul was convinced that prophecy in the NT carried less authority than written Scripture. Grudem comments,

If prophecy had equaled God's word in authority, he [Paul] would never have had to tell them not to despise it, for they had "received" and "accepted" God's word "with joy from the Holy Spirit" (1 Thess. 1:6; 2:13; cf. 4:15). But when Paul tells them to "test everything," it must include the prophecies mentioned in the previous phrase. He implies that prophecies contain some things that are good and some that are not when he encourages them to "hold fast to that which is good." This could never have been said of the words of an Old Testament prophet, or the authoritative teachings of a New Testament apostle.<sup>58</sup>

Grudem does not clearly explain why he believes the prophecies in the NT were not equal in authority to the Scriptures, but he does highlight a good point that Paul advocates: prophecies should be tested.

The inaccuracies of some prophecies may not lie in the gift of prophecy itself but in the immaturity of the believer to hear and deliver the word(s) accurately. Denying the gift of prophecy just because someone does not prophesy perfectly is the equivalent of eliminating curriculum in schools simply because some students do not score well on tests when demonstrating their understanding of the curriculum. The tests act as an assessment tool that help students identify areas of error or misunderstanding with regard to the curriculum, and these serve as an opportunity to grow. Likewise, the gift of prophecy may reveal areas of growth for the Christians who practice it, but in no way are Christians supposed to throw out the curriculum as if it were wrong for suggesting prophecy.

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<sup>58</sup> Grudem, "Why Christians," 30–31.

One of Cooke's prophetic testimonies demonstrates the ability of prophecy to mature the believer and its purpose as a tool to demonstrate love. One day God showed Cooke that a friend was struggling with pornography. Though Cooke received this revelation, Cooke carried some lingering offenses against this friend. When Cooke considered sharing the latest information he received, he approached it thinking in his heart, "See, you are in sin and God told me as a prophet of God." Cooke says that God immediately rebuked him for not having the love of God. Cooke came to understand that God showed him the situation of the brother as a symptom of a patient toward a doctor. The purpose was to heal this patient instead of condemning him.

Cooke felt greatly ashamed before God and started to cry. Afterward, God instructed Cooke to tell his friend about his sin, but Cooke refused. God commanded Cooke to go to his friend a second time. Cooke decided to obey. He drove to his house but could not speak a word; he just cried. The brother was puzzled and asked why he was crying. Cooke told him the whole story. Upon hearing, the friend also cried and repented for his sin. The friendship between them was restored.<sup>59</sup>

This is a great picture of the relationship between prophecy and love. The gift of prophecy not only caused Cooke to grow in love for God and his friend, but it also edified and corrected the friend receiving the word. God's intention in revealing information to Cooke was for the purpose of repentance, restoration, and reconciliation—foundational pieces to love. Cooke makes the point that many prophets can get information from God, but these are not necessarily revelations from the heart of God.

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<sup>59</sup> Graham Cooke, "Approaching the Heart of Prophecy," The Heart of Prophecy (MP3 podcast), <https://www.brilliantbookhouse.com/products/approaching-the-heart-of-prophecy-cd>.

Since Christians can be subject to pitfalls in prophesying, Kris Vallotton, a modern-day prophet in Bill Johnson's Bethel Church, offers some guidelines for interpreting and applying the revelations one receives from God. He divides prophecy into three steps to avoid error: 1) Revelation; 2) Interpretation; 3) Application. He gives an illustration of a wrong interpretation for a correct revelation. Sometimes, it is simply that one may not understand the revelation they got from God. Vallotton states,

Some time ago several of us traveled to a Morning Star conference where they were training people how to prophecy. With about 70 people in the room, we were all prophesying to a woman in the front of the room. We completed the ten prophecies allowed in a prophetic exercise, and then began to judge the words given to the woman. Suddenly, a man in the back of the room stood to his feet and said, "You have a yellow shirt on!" Immediately, the woman fell to the ground, crying hysterically.

The man continued to prophesy, saying things like, "The sun is yellow...the moon is yellow," and so on. When the woman finally regained her composure, the leader of the class asked her what the word meant to her. She explained, "I have a son who is autistic, and I told the Lord today, 'If you are going to heal my son, have someone tell me that I have a yellow shirt.'" The man who delivered this prophetic word stepped out of bounds and tried to give the woman an interpretation of the color yellow. Although the Holy Spirit used the word powerfully in the woman's life, the entire prophetic word was simply, "You have a yellow shirt on."<sup>60</sup>

In Charismatic churches nowadays, people often give prophetic words using phrases like, "I have a feeling" or "I felt the Lord impress me to say this." These are safer ways to give a prophetic word. In the case of the woman with the yellow shirt, the best way would be to say something like, "I have a word for you. You have a yellow shirt on. Does this make sense to you?" By sharing the word this way, one can avoid the errors of receiving the wrong revelation or misinterpreting the revelation.

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<sup>60</sup> Kris Vallotton, *Basic Training for the Prophetic Ministry* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, Inc., 2014), 34–35.

By acknowledging that one's speaking could be mixed with the words of the Lord and one's own feelings, these phrases leave room for error. Indicating that something is not necessarily 100% from God also supports Paul's exhortation when he preaches against pride during his instruction to the Corinthian believers. Claiming one has an impression is a humbler way to convey a prophetic message from God to others. This is also a way to ensure that one is speaking from a place of love.

### **Conclusion**

Although the gift of prophecy seemed inactive for a prolonged period of Christianity, God never purposed its extinction nor desired it. God raised believers to repossess the prophetic gift and he set forth times that the gifts of the Spirit would be restored. In these movements, some made errors. The Montanists even violated Scripture with some of their claims and this gave the Church the impression that the spiritual gifts were false or harmful to practice. Cessationist agendas still provoke believers to avoid and rebuke the spiritual gifts.

While it is true that misuses of the gifts exist, improper use is not biblical justification for why they should not be practiced. Error does not equal permission to dismiss the prophetic. Wrong conclusions and a lack of proper use and understanding of Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 12–14 have caused the body of Christ to forego the genuine gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially the gift of prophecy.

This chapter serves as a theological foundation supporting the assertion that God still desires that the body of Christ practice prophecy corporately today. This does not mean, however, that Christians should only pursue the gifts and neglect pursuing

individual and corporate holiness. As Nee and Lee taught, God requires believers to have an intimate relationship with Him and from this place the gifts can flow. Pursuing holiness and intimacy with God helps develop the gift of prophecy in the believer's life. Living a holy life keeps the believer clear of things that may contaminate the channel with which God speaks to and through. These practices help the believer become more accurate in their prophesying.

God wishes that believers grow in their gifts and be faithful in using them. Regardless of how one utters prophecy, Christians must learn to minister and practice prophesying from a place of love, since this is the measuring stick for using the gifts. In Bob Jones' death to life experience, Jones saw Christ asking everyone in heaven one question: "Did you learn to love?" When it was his turn, the Lord told him that he still had not learned to love, so God sent Jones back to earth.<sup>61</sup>

God's Spirit is eager to share his gifts with the body of Christ so that it may grow in love and unity. The gift of prophecy will be a necessary tool to strengthen the Body in these coming times. Concluding, Paul states in 2 Timothy 1:6–7, "For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands." The time is now for the gifts to be rekindled among the Body so that each may prophesy until all have reached the maturity or full stature of Christ. When perfection has been reached, then there shall be no need for prophecy. Until then, let us pursue it earnestly like Paul charges us to (1 Cor. 14:1).

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<sup>61</sup> Bob Jones, interview by Patricia King, "Bob Jones died- God sent him back from heaven's door-1," *theglorychannel*, June 27, 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3MRJ3wA5neU>.

The next chapter will discuss the implications of using the concept of unlearning to assimilate new and even uncomfortable changes into our lives. Unlearning allows an individual to willingly make room for accepting new concepts. Christians partake in the process of unlearning to receive new revelation from God. With respect to this project, unlearning a faulty concept about the charismatic gifts will be necessary for the Church to walk in the fullness of its mission on earth.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

#### Introduction

Unlearning is a term used in several academic fields, principally in psychology and education. It refers to the act of unlearning prior knowledge in order to gain new information. An art professor from Falmouth University uses the term “willed forgetfulness” to describe the unlearning process because of the implication that one must choose to approach, receive, and build upon new knowledge differently.<sup>1</sup>

Few people, however, are aware of this theory and its implications for individual and corporate growth. Brian L. Delahaye, a scholar in human resource development, points out the recent popularity of the unlearning theory. He comments,

It is interesting to reflect that the concept of unlearning only recently has become a phenomenon worthy of consideration in adult and organizational learning. Centuries ago, an individual’s knowledge would last a lifetime, indeed knowledge would be passed down generations and still be highly useful. This has changed during this century until, as we pass into the new millennium, knowledge becomes rapidly obsolete – hence the need to consider the unlearning process. Surprisingly, there has been very little written on the topic.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Baldacchino, “Willed Forgetfulness: The Arts, Education and the Case for Unlearning,” *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 32, no. 4 (July 2013): 415, <http://dtl.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/docview/1357221660?accountid=202487>.

<sup>2</sup> Karen Winderknecht and Brian Delahaye, “A Model of Individual and Organisational Unlearning,” (proceedings of the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management, University of Sydney, 2004), <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/1740/1/1740.pdf>.

While Delahaye makes an accurate observation as to the scarcity of resources regarding the unlearning theory, the need to unlearn has never been absent. Guarding former knowledge and tradition often play a role in hindering people from maturing and receiving new knowledge. This can also pertain to Christians receiving revelation from God whether through Scripture or information spoken and revealed by the Spirit of God through other means. Erroneous teaching and interpretation regarding prophecy, for example, is knowledge that needs to be unlearned in order for Christians to apply and utilize this gift today.

When Jesus taught on the earth, he criticized the Jews for holding strictly to their traditions to the point of not being open to receiving the new commandments of God, even the new Kingdom Jesus brought (Mark 7:5–13). When Christians are unwilling or resist this kind of transformation, corporate growth and individual maturity is compromised. The evaluation and application of the educational and organizational theory of unlearning will be used in this chapter to validate the Christian's ability to acquire new knowledge of Christian traditions and biblical gifts to effectively engage in prophesying and become more disciplined in reading the Scriptures and praying.

### **What Is Unlearning?**

The following are a few important definitions of the unlearning theory found in literature. A Swedish professor in business administration, Bo Hedberg, writes in his book, *How Organizations Learn and Unlearn*,

Knowledge grows, and simultaneously it becomes obsolete as reality changes. Understanding involves both learning new knowledge and discarding obsolete

and misleading knowledge. The discarding activity – unlearning – is as important a part of understanding as is adding new knowledge.<sup>3</sup>

Author John W. Newstrom defines unlearning as something similar to discarding. In his article, “The Management of Unlearning: Exploding the ‘Clean Slate’ Fallacy,” Newstrom says unlearning is “the process of reducing or eliminating preexisting knowledge or habits that would otherwise represent formidable barriers to new learning.”<sup>4</sup>

Coimbatore Krishnarao Prahalad and Richard A. Bettis, professors at Corporate Strategy, also state something similar. In their context, they believe unlearning is simply “the process by which firms eliminate old logics and behaviors and make room for new ones.”<sup>5</sup> Lastly, an organizational scientist, William Haynes Starbuck, writes that unlearning is “a process that shows people they should no longer rely on their current beliefs and methods.”<sup>6</sup>

All these examples from professionals in the fields of business, science, and education agree that learning new things requires recycling old information that may no longer be advantageous or relevant to the current standard or way of doing things. Interestingly, each definition above also describes unlearning as a process. This is

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<sup>3</sup> Bo Hedberg, “How Organizations Learn and Unlearn,” in *Handbook of Organizational Design: Adapting Organizations to Their Environment*, vol. 1, eds. Paul C. Nystrom and William H. Starbuck (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1981), 3.

<sup>4</sup> John W. Newstrom, “The Management of Unlearning: Exploding the “Clean Slate” Fallacy,” *Training and Development Journal* 37, no. 8 (August 1983): 36, <https://www.td.org/magazines/td-archive/1983/the-management-of-unlearning-exploding-the-clean-slate-fallacy>.

<sup>5</sup> Coimbatore Krishnarao Prahalad and Richard A. Bettis, “The Dominant Logic: A New Linkage Between Diversity and Performance,” *Strategic Management Journal* 7, no. 6 (November/December 1986): 485, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2486135?seq=1>.

<sup>6</sup> William Haynes Starbuck, “Unlearning Ineffective or Obsolete Technologies,” *International Journal of Technology Management* 11, no. 7, 8 (1996): 725, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228141359\\_Unlearning\\_Ineffective\\_or\\_Obsolete\\_Technologies](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228141359_Unlearning_Ineffective_or_Obsolete_Technologies).

important to keep in mind so that one does not assume that unlearning is an automatic and instant change.

Alvin Toffler, an American writer and futurist, stresses the importance of the unlearning process by quoting an analogy comparing the unlearned with the truly illiterate. He quotes psychologist Herbert Gerjuoy in his book, *Future Shock*: “The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.”<sup>7</sup> Toffler’s book sold more than six million copies and was translated into many languages.

Njoke Thomas from Case Western Reserve University writes regarding unlearning as a valid corporate and individual practice. In her article, “Towards a New Definition of Unlearning: Rethinking Individual Level Unlearning and Its Implications for Practice Change,” she says, “The concept of unlearning has emerged as a potential explanation for cognitive challenges associated with relinquishing outdated practices. Though introduced as both an individual level and organization level construct, far greater attention has been paid to the organizational level construct with little appraisal of the validity of individual unlearning.”<sup>8</sup> Thomas makes a critical point advantageous to the personal argument: there is validity in the unlearning process as it pertains to individual learning. That is, it is not just for giant organizations and hierarchal structures.

Furthermore, contrary to what Newstrom, Prahalad and Bettis think, authors Nancy Michael and Ben Wilson do not think unlearning is simply forgetting old

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<sup>7</sup> Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1970), 367.

<sup>8</sup> Njoke Thomas, “Towards a new definition of unlearning: rethinking individual level unlearning and its implications for practice change,” (thesis, Case Western Reserve University, 2011), 3, <https://weatherhead.case.edu/departments/organizational-behavior/workingPapers/WP-11-01.pdf>.

knowledge. They say, “Unlearning is neither forgetting nor removing old information, experiences, or ways of thinking; instead, it is building new patterns of synaptic communication that can support different ways of thinking.”<sup>9</sup> Nancy Michael is a professor of Neuroscience at the University of Notre Dame, and Ben Wilson is the Director of the Summer Service Learning Program at Notre Dame’s Center for Social Concerns. They teamed up to author the article, “Unlearning is the New Learning: A Neuroscientific and Theological Case for How and Why to See the World Differently.” They discuss the implications of unlearning and consider the process of unlearning to be much more difficult than learning. They write,

Learning, as it turns out, was the easy part. Anyone who has observed a young child mimic the behavior of others knows how naturally children learn from their environment. Unlearning, on the other hand, takes maturity, discipline, and equal parts courage and humility. Unlearning, as discussed here, requires conscious effort to reflect on past learning to create the possibility of new future learning that goes beyond our passively formulated, yet operative, mental constructs that undergird how we understand the world and the people around us. Unlearning is the imperative of a maturing mind which recognizes the perennial importance of seeing things rightly. If unlearning is the new learning, so to speak, how does one go about unlearning and what difference does it make?<sup>10</sup>

To explain their point, Michael and Wilson refer to a bike riding experiment performed by an American engineer, Destin Sandlin. Sandlin posted videos on YouTube of his own unlearning and relearning process of riding a modified bicycle. Riding a bike is an easy task for the one who has already mastered it, but Sandler made some purposeful changes: “the direction of a bicycle’s handlebars were reversed so that turning

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<sup>9</sup> Nancy Michael and Ben Wilson, “Unlearning Is the New Learning: A Neuroscientific and Theological Case for How and Why to See the World Differently,” *University of Notre Dame Church Life Journal*, August 23, 2018, <https://churchlifejournal.nd.edu/articles/unlearning-is-the-new-learning-a-neuroscientific-and-theological-case-for-how-and-why-to-see-the-world-differently/>.

<sup>10</sup> Michael, “Unlearning Is the New Learning.”

the handlebars to the left would steer the bike to the right and vice versa.”<sup>11</sup> It took Sandlin eight months of daily practice to master riding this special bike. When he offered a two-hundred-dollar prize to anyone who could ride this bike for ten feet without falling or using their feet for support, no one could do it. He offered this prize to several people on separate occasions and not a single person could complete the task.<sup>12</sup>

Sandlin’s point was to prove that our brains are programmed with the knowledge we have acquired and this knowledge or understanding affects one’s ability to learn or perform a new task or action. Sandlin, as an adult, had to retrain his brain according to a new bike model in order to ride it. However, for his six-year-old son who had been riding a normal bike for just three years, it only took him two weeks to adapt to the updated version. This has a lot to do with the neuroplasticity of the brain and the pathways of learning that become concrete with prolonged patterns of behavior. It is true that it is much easier for a child to learn, relearn, and unlearn things.

Once Sandlin became accustomed to riding this new bike, he found himself unable to ride a normal bike for quite a while. On one attempt, it took him twenty minutes to become adapted and people on the street around him thought he was pretending that he did not know how to ride a bike. Michael and Wilson comment,

Destin’s bike experiment suggests a maladaptive aspect of our mental tenacity for holding onto learned ways of thinking. If it is that difficult to unlearn a particular way of riding a bike, consider the implications of any misinformation we may have “learned” about other human beings: for instance, how we feel about

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<sup>11</sup> Michael, “Unlearning Is the New Learning.”

<sup>12</sup> Destin Sandlin, “The Backwards Brain Bicycle - Smarter Every Day 133,” (YouTube video), *SmarterEveryDay*, April 24, 2015, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MFzDaBzBIL0&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MFzDaBzBIL0&feature=emb_logo).

strangers, or people from countries other than our own, or people whose skin is a different color than ours, or people who sleep on park benches.<sup>13</sup>

Michael and Wilson's statement is intriguing. It highlights the fact that a healthy human brain always has the capacity to learn something new which is a God-given gift. It also shows that held beliefs or individual experiences can impede the process of learning and lead to making incorrect judgments or interpretations. This bike experiment vividly shows how important the process of unlearning is. It also inadvertently demonstrates that one's choice to unlearn and relearn will affect one's ability to acquire new habits or information. In the same way, Christians may choose to relearn how to live their life after receiving Christ. They may choose to become transformed according to the model of God's Kingdom. Although this is not an easy task, Sandlin and biblical characters' experiences demonstrate that it is possible.

### **Unlearning Theory Applied in the Christian Context**

While unlearning is often used in human resource domains to train employees to receive new knowledge or in the psychology field to change a person's mindset or behaviors, it is not limited to these domains. Unlearning serves secular fields well, but it can also be applied to the religious field. The apostle Paul instructs believers in Romans 12:2, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect." Paul understood that when an identity shift takes place, there must also be a subsequent alteration in one's perspective, attitude, and behavior.

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<sup>13</sup> Michael, "Unlearning Is the New Learning."

A good example of this unlearning is the Christian concept of repentance. John the Baptist commanded the Jews to repent (Matt. 3:2). The word “repent” in Greek is *metanoeō* and its meaning is “to repent, to change any or all of the elements composing one’s life: attitude, thoughts, and behaviors concerning the demands of God for right living.”<sup>14</sup> In the Recovery Version Bible used in the Local Church Movement, the footnote for the word repent states, “to repent is to have a change of mind issuing in regret, to have a turn in purpose.”<sup>15</sup> In other words, if you only regret something but continue doing it, it is not true repentance.

True repentance involves both regret and change of mind. Michael and Wilson explain this process in their article. They say,

Some observations from theology can further supplement the case from neuroscience for the importance of unlearning. Robert Barron suggests the Greek term *metanoeite*, which is related to the terms for conversion and repentance, is best translated as “to go beyond the mind that you have.”<sup>16</sup> Whereas the term “conversion” has come to connote an extrinsic change in one’s religious affiliation, *metanoia* refers to a reconfiguration and transformation of one’s very mind, and thus is something of a theological cognate to the neuroscientific process we’ve been describing as unlearning.<sup>17</sup>

We can apply this experience to others area beyond repentance. Within certain denominations, the traditions of men and religion are passed down by leaders and spiritual fathers, and adherents receive them without considering their origin or validity. Often persons do not engage with what they are being taught to the level of comparing it

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<sup>14</sup> *Stepbible.org*, s.v. “repent,”  
<https://www.stepbible.org/?q=version=ESV|reference=Matt.3&options=VNHUG>.

<sup>15</sup> Recovery Version Bible (Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 2003).

<sup>16</sup> Robert Barron, *And Now I See: A Theology of Transformation* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1998), 4.

<sup>17</sup> Michael, *Unlearning Is the New Learning*.”



with prior knowledge and discarding what no longer serves them as truth. This is not to say that the Word of God should be rewritten or recycled, but teaching and tradition should be evaluated and tested. When tradition is not tested against sound biblical teaching and interpretation, Christians may only boast to a one-time conversion experience and remain unknowingly resisting subsequent and necessary *metanoete* and unlearning experiences comparable to Paul's instruction of being transformed and renewed continually.

Another example is an unbeliever who joins a church service. This person may have a conversion experience upon hearing new information. However, this external change, although internal as well, is not the same as experiencing *metanoia* as an ongoing process of embracing more complex internal mental shifts that occur as a result of walking in relationship with God and being transformed by the Word of God and through experiences with the Holy Spirit. For new growth to occur, Christians will have to embrace the unlearning process continually, which includes being open to new information or reinterpretations of formerly misunderstood concepts or ways of life and being open to *metanoete* experiences.

Michael and Wilson also describe Paul's life as a notable example of unlearning. Paul was a fervent Jew taught by Gamaliel. Although Paul persecuted Christians, he met Jesus on his way to Damascus. His dramatic conversion was a process of unlearning. At his defense before King Agrippa, Paul even says, "Indeed, I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things against the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 26:9). Paul had been convinced that his former way was accurate to truth, and it took Jesus' appearance in the form of a dazzling light to begin the process of unlearning his behavior and old

knowledge. Essentially, Paul became blind until healed by the Holy Spirit through Ananias; then his eyes were opened. It was at this point that he began to see Jesus Christ differently. Paul went from utter blindness into a brand-new perspective, and his behaviors followed. He went from being a murderer to a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is a paradigmatic example of the unlearning and relearning experience.

Paul was certainly not the only case. The Bible is full of stories like this. Ananias had to unlearn his previous knowledge about Paul. When the Lord asked him to lay hands on Paul, he initially refused because he had heard about Paul's evil acts toward Christians. It was not until Jesus assured Ananias that Paul was a special vessel chosen for God's glory, that Ananias conceded and went to lay hands on him (Acts 9:10–17).

Perhaps miraculous experiences like these help to unlearn patterns of thought or behavior quicker than by other means. However, it is important to recall that some scholars believe it may have taken Paul up to fourteen years to unlearn his old way of life and relearn and prepare himself for ministry. That is, Paul likely relearned life for at least three years (Gal. 1:17) and up to the fourteen years that existed between his conversion and his second trip to Jerusalem with Barnabas (Gal. 2:1). Robert Charles Sproul writes in his article, "The Preparation of Paul":

Paul said that when Christ called him, he did not go to Jerusalem to receive instruction from the apostles. Rather, he retired into Arabia for a time and not until three years later did he go to Jerusalem. Even then, the only apostle he met was Peter, and the only other leader he met was James, the presiding elder of the Jerusalem church. It has often been remarked that Paul clearly implied that he spent three years being taught by Jesus Himself (1:12), either directly or (perhaps more likely) through the study of the Word. Thus, like the other apostles, Paul studied with Christ for three years before beginning his ministry (compare Acts 1:21).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Robert Charles Sproul, "The Preparation of Paul," Ligonier Ministries, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/the-preparation-of-paul/>.

Preacher S. Lewis Johnson expands further on Paul's preparation time in a sermon. He writes,

Paul's seven or eight years or more, how long they were we're not absolutely certain, but they were a good many years, may have had some connection with the discipline of God that the Lord wanted to put him, who is to be the great apostle of the Gentiles through.<sup>19</sup>

Whether it took three, eight, or fourteen years, Paul chose to embrace the process of unlearning so much that it transformed him into one of the most famous people in history.

Peter is another example of someone who embraced the unlearning process. In Acts 10, Peter received a vision of a sheet containing all kinds of animals including mammals, birds, and reptiles. He heard a voice commanding him to eat. Shocked, Peter initially rejected the idea because it did not align with his former way of life. Jewish dietary laws would never allow him to consider such a thing. God cleared up Peter's confusion by explaining a new order for the human diet: all animals were declared kosher. More importantly, God used this vision to change Peter's mind to align with God's decision about who was eligible to receive the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Peter eventually chose to accept his new commission to bring the gospel to the Gentiles thereby unlearning his former conviction and understanding of God. He was also then able to testify to Jewish Christians in Jerusalem that God extended salvation to the Gentiles (Acts 10:18). Peter certainly experienced some unlearning as he made the transition from his former traditions to receive God's sovereign mandates. In another instance, the Pharisees were invited several times into the unlearning process. Jesus

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<sup>19</sup> S. Lewis Johnson, "The Worker Awaiting the Work," (transcript, Believers Chapel, 2008), [https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/sljinstitute-production/topical\\_studies/great\\_lion\\_of\\_God/07\\_SLJ\\_Great\\_Lion\\_of\\_God.pdf](https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/sljinstitute-production/topical_studies/great_lion_of_God/07_SLJ_Great_Lion_of_God.pdf).

rebuked them repeatedly for holding onto their traditions but nullifying the Word of God (Mark 7:13). Unfortunately, these “separate ones” separated themselves so much that they could no longer identify with the true Christ and his teachings.<sup>20</sup> Even today, there are still many Jews who are not willing to unlearn their traditions to accept Jesus as their Messiah.

The more pertinent example related to this project is connected to 1 Corinthians 13:10. Many Evangelical Christians have been and still are taught that prophecy and other gifts of the Spirit are not available for use today. Yet, the Bible does encourage their use today and even calls it profitable. Since such believers often do not have firsthand experiences with prophesying or the other gifts, this reinforces their prior beliefs. The deception and former way of thinking is further fortified when these persons receive reports of erroneous and unfulfilled prophecies or hear of the immaturity of other believers who practice prophecy. For this to change, these Christians will have to be willing to engage in an unlearning process to reset their beliefs according to biblical truth. This may require a humble and courageous attitude, a supernatural experience, or hearing and receiving new teaching from other theologians, teachers, and pastors.

Dr. Nick Gough wrote a thesis titled, “Postmodern Apologetics: A Charismatic Discipleship Program for Postmodern Missionaries.” In this, Gough points out the importance of unlearning and relearning as YWAM students embrace the power of evangelizing according to a charismatic, New Testament model of evangelism. He says,

To use a traditional apologetic limits one in bringing a person to Christ. There is a culture shift. The use of traditional methods of evangelism is ineffective today. To give an example, a young adult of this author’s acquaintance traveled overseas

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<sup>20</sup> Stepbible, s.v. “farisaios,”  
<https://www.stepbible.org/?q=version=ESV|strong=G5330&options=N VHUG>.

with a well-known campus group. They used a traditional form of evangelism, a type of survey questionnaire that they administered to over five thousand college students in Australia. The intent of this survey was to lead students to Christ. Out of the five thousand surveys, there was no conversion. By way of contrast, this author trained a group of YWAM students who went to Germany to evangelize immigrant Muslims. In four weeks, that group led over five hundred people to the Lord. What is the difference? The group in Germany had divine encounters while praying for the sick and operating in the prophetic. This is an example of a modernist model versus Jesus' charismata model.<sup>21</sup>

To be able to minister the gospel this way requires a complete rewiring because no one lives or is taught to communicate with people in supernatural ways. These students had to relearn life according to an awareness of the supernatural power available to them through Jesus Christ—all Christians do. Perhaps the most radical process of unlearning is the one a true follower of Jesus Christ must go through.

### **Unlearning in Society and the Prophetic Church**

Declining attendance and membership are common concerns for church leaders in the US, and their concern is real. Jeffery M. Jones, a Gallup senior editor, writes in a 2019 article,

U.S. church membership was 70% or higher from 1937 through 1976, falling modestly to an average of 68% in the 1970s through the 1990s. The past 20 years have seen an acceleration in the drop-off, with a 20-percentage-point decline since 1999 and more than half of that change occurring since the start of the current decade.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Dr. Nick Gough, "Postmodern Apologetics: A Charismatic Discipleship Program for Postmodern Missionaries," (DMin. Thesis, United Theological Seminary, 2013), 10–11.

<sup>22</sup> Jeffery M. Jones, "U.S. Church Membership Down Sharply in Past Two Decades," Gallup, April 18, 2019, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/248837/church-membership-down-sharply-past-two-decades.aspx>.

Even according to a report done in 2018 and 2019 by Pew Research Center, “65% of American adults describe themselves as Christians when asked about their religion, down 12 percentage points over the past decade.”<sup>23</sup>

However, in the last one hundred years, the Pentecostal church has seen tremendous growth. David Masci, a former senior writer focusing on religion at Pew Research Center, authored an article in 2014 titled, “Why Has Pentecostalism Grown So Dramatically in Latin America?” In it, he explains, “With nearly 300 million followers worldwide, including many in Africa and Latin America, Pentecostalism is now a global phenomenon.”<sup>24</sup> Pew Research Center published another report regarding the statistics of Pentecostals. It states,

According to the World Christian Database, at least a quarter of the world’s 2 billion Christians are thought to be members of these lively, highly personal faiths, which emphasize such spiritually renewing “gifts of the Holy Spirit” as speaking in tongues, divine healing and prophesying.<sup>25</sup>

In an effort to promote this report, Russell Heimlich wrote an article called “Pentecostals and Gifts of the Holy Spirit.” He describes the Pentecostal experience:

Pentecostals are more likely than other Christians to report having experienced or witnessed divine healings, having received direct revelations from God and having experienced or seen exorcisms. 62% of U.S. Pentecostals say they have witnessed divine healings and 54% say they have received direct revelations from God. Pentecostals from other parts of the world — including Latin America, Africa and Asia — are also more likely than other Christians to report such

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<sup>23</sup> Pew Research Center, “In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace,” Pew Research Center on Religion and Public Life, October 17, 2019, <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/>.

<sup>24</sup> David Masci, “Why has Pentecostalism grown so dramatically in Latin America?,” Pew Research Center, November 14, 2014, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/11/14/why-has-pentecostalism-grown-so-dramatically-in-latin-america/>.

<sup>25</sup> Pew Research Center, “Spirit and Power – A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals,” Pew Research Center on Polling and Analysis, October 5, 2006, <https://www.pewforum.org/2006/10/05/spirit-and-power/>.

experiences, with 86% of Kenyan Pentecostals saying they have witnessed or experienced an exorcism.<sup>26</sup>

Mark Stibbe defines prophetic evangelism in his book, *Prophetic Evangelism*. He says, “Prophetic evangelism is simply God using revelatory phenomena to speak to the hearts of those who don’t know Jesus.”<sup>27</sup> Stibbe outlines many personal examples of how prophetic words opened the door for him to minister the gospel. He also lists the story of Samaritan woman in John 4 and how Jesus’ prophetic word or word of knowledge about her having five husbands radically changed her. She even became an evangelist immediately by telling her town what Jesus did.

Stibbe also shares a story of his friend Jonathan, a prophetic minister. Jonathan ministered to a young man in a pub by giving him a prophetic word that he was dying from AIDS. The boy testified that it was true and that he had been crying out to God that day on the streets to know and see that God is real and cares for him. With this prophetic word, Jonathan was able to lead this young man to receive Christ. Stibbe comments,

A move of God is already occurring among the poor. It is now beginning to spread into the mainstream of society. One of the greatest resources in evangelism is proving to be prophetic revelation. Indeed, I sense in my spirit that the gift of prophecy will turn out to be a golden sickle in the hands of the harvesters. This should encourage us to recognize that it’s time to get stuck into prophetic evangelism!<sup>28</sup>

For persons in Pentecostal and Charismatic circles, this kind of ministering has already become an assimilated practice because these Christians choose to embrace the unlearning process of discarding former ways of ministering in order to build a new

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<sup>26</sup> Russell Heimlich, “Pentecostals and gifts of the Holy Spirit,” Pew Research Center, October 24, 2007, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2007/10/24/pentecostals-and-gifts-of-the-holy-spirit/>.

<sup>27</sup> Mark Stibbe, *Prophetic Evangelism* (Milton Keynes, UK: Authentic Lifestyle, 2004), 3.

<sup>28</sup> Stibbe, *Prophetic Evangelism*, 58.

mindset and practice of ministry. However, old patterns and knowledge prevents many other Christians from receiving and using the gift of prophecy. Michael Slaughter, an author and Pastor Emeritus at Ginghamburg Church, authored a book called *Unlearning Church*. He urges the Church to unlearn old patterns and rules of the past. He says,

UnLearning is about going a different direction. UnLearning means repentance. It requires us to identify ways we were wrong and to rebuild in a new direction. UnLearning is about breaking away from the pack because a crowd will always be slower to respond to the radical voice of Jesus Christ. UnLearning is about ways the Holy Spirit can adjust your leadership skills and attitudes. Then you, in return, can lead the way for a similar transformation in others.<sup>29</sup>

Unlearning is a necessary skill for societies and churches. There are significant consequences when humans do not engage in the unlearning process. Kris Taylor writes in an article, “The Skill of Unlearning,”

Those without “unlearning” in their repertoire see their current worldview as the only one, unquestionable and enduring. This inability to deconstruct current thinking can lead to colossal missteps, such as William Orton, President of Western Union declining to buy the patent for the telephone for \$100K. His reply: “Mr. Bell, after careful consideration of your invention, while it is a very interesting novelty, we have come to the conclusion it has no commercial possibilities... What use could this company have for an electrical toy?”

Examples abound. Kodak, the first to have digital imaging capability, clung to the belief that their business, even in a digital world, would be MORE in demand, as people would print more and more, points to its undoing. Blockbuster could not unlearn their corner store business model – and as a result Netflix took them down. Gateway had 25% of the personal use PC market, but is a mere footnote now, due to the inability to let go of the belief that consumers ONLY wanted desktop computers.<sup>30</sup>

Slaughter also recognizes that unlearning is the key to becoming successful in planting churches in a new age. He says, “The call is to unlearn—to break the rules of

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<sup>29</sup> Michael Slaughter, *Unlearning Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008), 19.

<sup>30</sup> Kris Taylor, “The Skill of Unlearning,” Evergreen Leadership, August 20, 2015, <https://evergreenleadership.com/2015/08/20/the-skill-of-unlearning/>.



conventional wisdom in order to translate God's ancient purposes to today's postmodern world. The challenge is to translate and target those purposes to each indigenous environment."<sup>31</sup> Failure to unlearn exemplified in Blockbuster's decline and disappearance, often results in bankruptcy in the business world. The inability to unlearn in the Church also leads to failure and spiritual bankruptcy. In his book, Slaughter talks about the failures of the religious leaders in Jesus' time. Slaughter states,

One mistake church leaders make is thinking that their success and worth as a pastor are in doing it "by the book," adhering strictly to the rule book of their denomination or by legalistically focusing on every detail in the Book—the Bible itself.

Jesus lived in an era when well-trained leaders were on every corner, but these leaders were neither relevant nor contagious. They knew all 613 commandments in the Torah, and were quick to correct people if they didn't follow them precisely; but the people were not looking for correction, they were seeking the presence of God. Some left the comforts of Jerusalem's magnificent temple, letting their search for God take them out into the wilderness to listen to a prophet named John who wasn't deemed religiously correct or within the boundaries of traditional expressions of faith.<sup>32</sup>

Christians must not make the error of shutting themselves off to the uncommon and misunderstood biblical truths. Christians need to be willing to step into the wilderness of the unlearning and relearning process so that they can become salt and light on the earth as Jesus commanded, especially because other people desire to hear the voice of God. When God's people do not reveal the Father's voice, people will settle for counterfeits. If one cannot hear God's voice from their church, they may go to a different church that can speak prophetically to them. Other persons, however, will turn to New Age practices to tap into the supernatural realm.

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<sup>31</sup> Slaughter, *Unlearning Church*, 16–17.

<sup>32</sup> Slaughter, *Unlearning Church*, 140.

Phil Johnson is the Executive Director of Grace to You, which features the preaching ministry of John MacArthur. Johnson writes in his article, “What’s New with the New Age? Why Christians Need to Remain on Guard against the Threat of New Age Spirituality,” “New Age Spirituality is fast-food religion perfectly suited for a postmodern culture like ours. It offers a quick–and–easy feeling of satisfaction with almost no real nourishment for the soul, while it contains additives and artificial ingredients that are actually harmful to true spiritual health.”<sup>33</sup> Claire Gecewicz adds to the discussion of the dangers of new age beliefs. In a report by Pew Research Center, she states,

Most American adults self-identify as Christians. But many Christians also hold what are sometimes characterized as “New Age” beliefs – including belief in reincarnation, astrology, psychics and the presence of spiritual energy in physical objects like mountains or trees. Many Americans who are religiously unaffiliated also have these beliefs.

Overall, roughly six-in-ten American adults accept at least one of these New Age beliefs. Specifically, four-in-ten believe in psychics and that spiritual energy can be found in physical objects, while somewhat smaller shares express belief in reincarnation (33%) and astrology (29%).<sup>34</sup>

New Age practices pose serious threats to Christianity, and people’s involvement with the New Age reveals the strong interest humans have in the spiritual world. It is not that people are always unwilling to unlearn the natural mechanics of life and former cognitive perceptions, as involvement in other ungodly spiritual practices demonstrate. Instead, it is that Christians are often too fearful, religious, or resistant to dismantle their

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<sup>33</sup> Phil Johnson, “What’s New with the New Age? Why Christians Need to Remain on Guard against the Threat of New Age Spirituality,” [https://sbts-wordpress-uploads.s3.amazonaws.com/equip/uploads/2010/02/sbjt\\_104\\_johnson.pdf](https://sbts-wordpress-uploads.s3.amazonaws.com/equip/uploads/2010/02/sbjt_104_johnson.pdf).

<sup>34</sup> Claire Gecewicz, “‘New Age’ beliefs common among both religious and nonreligious Americans,” Pew Research Center, October 1, 2018, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/10/01/new-age-beliefs-common-among-both-religious-and-nonreligious-americans/>.

once held beliefs about the supernatural to engage in the most authentic and correct spiritual experiences that lead to life.

While Satan attempts to deceive the world through occultic prophetic gifts in the New Age and other religions, Christians can be confident that God already designed a plan to release His prophetic gifts to His people. This was prophesied by Joel and quoted by Peter: “In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams” (Acts 2:17). For the one willing to forget his old and powerless way of life, this one may prophesy. It is clear, however, that not everyone believes this.

John Nelson Darby, for example, was adamant about the need to pursue holiness, but he stayed away from the religious establishment of his time and from the spiritual gifts. He rebuked Edward Irving’s supposed wayward teachings that championed the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Other scholars in the modern prophetic movement, however, hold different views regarding Irving and his practice of the biblical gifts. For example, Ernest B. Gentile writes in his book, *Your Sons & Daughters Shall Prophesy*, that Edward Irving and the Catholic Apostolic Church (A.D. 1830), along with two other movements, The Apostolic Church of Great Britain (A.D. 1916) and the Latter Rain Movement (A.D. 1948), are the three movements that God used to recover the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the body of Christ before the modern prophetic movement officially started in the 1980s. He says,

Each of these evangelical groups was thoroughly devoted to Christ and the Bible and characterized by the ministry of prophecy in the local church, a belief in glossolalia and a belief in contemporary apostles and prophets.

These three renewal movements (in contrast to the larger Pentecostal and charismatic renewal movements) provide convenient windows for easier viewing of the blessings and problems connected with spiritual manifestations, particularly prophecy.<sup>35</sup>

It is a pity that Darby did not see this and thereby help Irving foster a richer environment that would allow the gifts of the Holy Spirit to be balanced with the holiness he pursued. If this had been the case, it would have brought the modern prophetic movement much more benefit. The necessity remains today for God's prophetic church to rise up and be who she was intended to be, pure and holy, and also full of the Spirit. For Watchman Nee, the founder of the LCM, it was necessary to both learn and unlearn things taught by the Brethren Movement. Nee intended to receive all the biblical truths they taught but unlearn any human traditions. One example of Nee's unlearning is recorded in Witness Lee's book, *Watchman Nee-A Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age*. Lee speaks to the issue that many Chinese Christians were not assured of their salvation. Lee says regarding Nee,

As he began to preach the gospel, he discovered the need of some clear teaching concerning assurance of salvation. Along with his preaching of the gospel, he incorporated the clear word of the Bible concerning the assurance of salvation. In the twelve years between 1922 and 1934, through his labor this matter was made clear to the Chinese Christians. In the fall of 1933, I was invited to preach in a chapel of a Presbyterian hospital in the city of Soochow, Kiangsu. While telling the audience that they could know assuredly that they were saved according to the Bible, I noticed the pastor shaking his head, indicating that he did not agree. This incident depicted the ignorant situation of so many Christians concerning the matter of salvation in China at that time. Since 1934, however, up to this present moment, the two matters of salvation by grace and the assurance of salvation have become crystal clear to the Christians in the Far East, and it has become popular to preach these truths in all the denominations.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ernest B. Gentile, *Your Sons & Daughters Shall Prophesy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 1999), 267–268.

<sup>36</sup> Witness Lee, *Watchman Nee-A Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age* (Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministries, 1991), 273.

Nee faced major opposition when he dismantled the traditional teaching that pastors needed to earn their salvation through Christian ministry. Witness Lee, one of Nee's coworkers, followed suit to unlearn certain traditions and relearn biblical truths lost in history. This is why the LCM is also referred to as the Lord's Recovery.<sup>37</sup> As mentioned above, one of the truths Lee recovered was the practice of Pray reading. One of the most famous opponents to Lee's Pray reading was Stephen Kaung, a coworker of both Nee and Lee since the early 1930's.<sup>38</sup> Kaung did not agree with Lee's practice of Pray reading and he criticized Lee by calling it "the latent power of the soul," which is the name of one of Nee's publications.

Kaung's disbelief in Pray reading and a number of other disagreements led Lee and Kaung to part ways. However, Lee's practice of Pray reading has helped many members in the LCM and outside of the LCM to enter the presence of the Lord and receive revelation from the Word of God. Liu Tong is a pastor from a Taiwan-based Pentecostal denomination called Bread of Life Christian Church in Taipei. Liu openly testifies to the benefits Pray reading has had on his ministry and those under his ministry. Liu is now the pastor of River of Life Christian Church in Silicon Valley, California. According to his website,

In September 1996, concerned about the lack of spirituality of Silicon Valley workers, Pastor Liu Wei began working on a daily spiritual line, sharing five minutes of telephone calls a day to lead believers to read the scriptures chapter by chapter in a life-like tone. Over the years, not only in the telephone technology breakthrough, but also touched the lives of countless Chinese Christians

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<sup>37</sup> Witness Lee, *A Brief Presentation of the Lord's Recovery*, chap. 1, sec. 2 (1993), in Living Stream Ministry, <https://www.ministrybooks.org/books.cfm?n>.

<sup>38</sup> SI, "A History of the Kaung and Lee Lines in America," The Church of Gideon and His 300 Men, April 18, 2018, <http://lordsrecovery.us/LeeKaungLinesinAmerica.pdf>.

throughout North America. The original simple idea, in the hands of God, has become a bridge to connect thousands of miles of blessings.<sup>39</sup>

Liu testifies publicly that in the beginning he did not have much enlightenment to share with his listeners, so he started the practice of Pray reading which he learned from the LCM. He would Pray read the word of God out loud and meditate on it. He testifies that every time he engaged in Pray reading, the Holy Spirit would give him revelation to share with his listeners. Both his listeners and he were surprised by the revelations he received after Pray reading. He says,

When I Pray read the Word of God, I find this method is the easiest way to read the Bible. You surely will get enlightenment as long as you read it aloud and Pray read repeatedly. I used to read Psalm 89:14: “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.”<sup>40</sup> The more I Pray read it (the verse), the more I felt it wonderfully. I have never seen this wonderful picture before. The Lord is sitting on the foundation of righteousness and justice, but His steadfast love walks before Him. When a person gets to know God, it starts from His steadfast love. Then His faithfulness is around Him. It is only when we get closer to God more often, then we can experience His faithfulness. Have you read the Word of God today? When you read the Word of God through Pray reading, then the Word of God can become your help and strength.<sup>41</sup>

Nowadays Liu is a successful and famous preacher among the Chinese Christian community and his ministry is especially influential among Chinese Pentecostal Christians. Lee’s practice of Pray reading can be credited with positively impacting people like Liu of other denominations. None of this would be possible, however, if Lee

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<sup>39</sup> River of Life Christian Church, “Spiritual line,” <https://www.rolcc.net/rolcc/spiritual-hotline>.

<sup>40</sup> Ps. 89:14.

<sup>41</sup> Tong Liu, “Spiritual Nourishment,” *Daily Devotion with Pastor Tong Liu* (blog), January 29, 2018, <http://riveroflifedailydevotion-mobile.blogspot.com/2018/01/412-15.html>. The post is in Chinese and translated by the author of this paper.

had not set his mind to unlearn certain practices and traditions and embrace others. Lee understood and recognized the fact that humans are limited by previous knowledge.

While tradition is an enormous hindrance stopping persons from engaging in the unlearning process, there are motivating factors behind the refusal to unlearn. Author Irving H. Buchen lists some of these in his article, “An Organizational New Year’s Resolution: To Unlearn.” He writes,

Moreover, changing one's ways is not easy, let alone changing one's thinking about one's ways. Workers may worry that a new approach will be unacceptable or that they will embarrass themselves by trying something different.”<sup>42</sup>

Thomas evaluates and expands on Buchen’s point by adding that complacency and fear of failure are large contributors to the resistance of unlearning a tradition and relearning new knowledge. She says,

Paramount in Buchen’s thinking was the idea that organizational success often fostered complacency. Despite the negative valuation often ascribed to failure it could contribute greatly to organizational creativity, if approached with a positive attitude. For Buchen, this receptiveness to mistakes and failure was indicative of an unlearning culture.<sup>43</sup>

Understanding the psychology of why persons resist unlearning is important. For Evangelicals, most do not pursue speaking in tongues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit because they are afraid of being deceived by evil spirits or engaging in something that will lead them astray. They fear becoming disobedient to God, and their resistance is actually rooted in a deep love for Christ. Buchen and Thomas help leaders in the church understand how to help lay people and other Christians enter and make peace with the

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<sup>42</sup> Irving H. Buchen, “An Organizational New Year’s Resolution: To Unlearn,” *National Productivity Review* 18, no. 1 (Winter 1998): 1, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/npr.4040180102>.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas, “Towards a new definition.”

process of unlearning by exposing such fears, communicating about them and bringing revelation and proper translation of God's Word to the table. Perhaps then persons may be willing to forget their former way of doing things to walk on a riskier path with Christ and other charismatic believers.

### **Conclusion**

Unlearning requires that a person willingly let go of their former beliefs, attitudes, and perspectives to courageously build upon former knowledge in such a way that transformation takes place. Unlearning is a process that obliges one to relearn how to approach life and decisions with a different mindset and strategy. Professors, psychologists, businessmen, and other professionals are catching on to this cognitive phenomenon because of the growth and maturity it offers.

In the context of the Church and within Christian denominations, the theory of unlearning urges Christians to reconsider their traditions and former interpretations of the Word of the God. It also encourages believers to reevaluate their understanding of biblical and spiritual concepts in order to embrace and apply to their lives a more holistic model of a Spirit-filled believer. Biblical characters like Peter, Paul, Ananias, and the Pharisees serve as examples of those invited into the unlearning process. The positive and negative consequences of their reception or refusal to unlearn and relearn are evident.

The LCM serves as a fitting example of a denomination and people capable of unlearning traditions to embrace biblical practices such as mediation on the Word of God. The LCM developed new habits and mindsets through Pray reading. The LCM, however, did not go far enough to unlearn their understanding and practice of prophesying. LCM



members still teach and embrace that prophecy is only forthtelling. If they were to engage in expanding their understanding of prophecy, they would see that prophecy includes forthtelling and foretelling components.

Likewise, Christians affiliated with Pentecostal and Charismatic congregations have embraced the unlearning process to the degree that they have allowed themselves to experiment and live according to a riskier and more supernatural way of life that includes prophecy and use of spiritual gifts. However, while learning to live and minister supernaturally, it can be argued that some of these persons need to unlearn the idea that giftedness is a substitute for scriptural holiness. They may have neglected personal maturity in this way. They, therefore, could benefit from growth in their character and pursuit of holy living.

To deconstruct limitations and former beliefs that persons in Evangelical or LCM traditions may have, this chapter explores and promotes the theory and techniques of unlearning and relearning to grow in the gift of prophecy. To grow in devotion to prayer and holy living, Pentecostal and Charismatic persons can unlearn old habits or attitudes that are not fitting for God's people. They can learn to embrace new ways of reading and meditating upon the Word of God to change them. This can be done through the practice of Pray reading. LCM members, however, need to engage in the unlearning process to relearn how to move in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The theory of unlearning is crucial to this project because LCM members were taught incorrect theology regarding prophecy. Some parts of their understanding of what prophecy is and how it functions in the believer's life must be discarded to receive new teaching on the correct biblical model for prophecy that is practiced in Pentecostal and Charismatic settings. Old paradigm shifts

regarding biblical truths will have to be traded for new wineskins to fully receive the message that Christ brought regarding the life of an empowered Christian.

The next chapter will examine the project analysis. The full appraisal and outcomes of this project are outlined in this final chapter. An evaluation of the project during and after implementation is recorded. The participants in my study were expected to unlearn wrong beliefs about the prophetic gift. They were taught to embrace a new paradigm (to foretell prophesy) and put it into practice after receiving teaching and training on the charismatic gifts as it relates to hearing God's voice.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **PROJECT ANALYSIS**

#### **Introduction**

Inspiration for this project came when I transitioned from my former Evangelical church to a Charismatic congregation. After responding to the Lord's nudge to pursue a doctoral degree, I wondered what to do for my project. It is fitting to preface this finalized thesis with the beginnings of my spiritual journey. Within the Local Church Movement (LCM) to which I was a member, there exists a form of prophesying different to what I witnessed in other churches. The main component of prophecy for LCM churches consists of the act of forthtelling prophecy. The foretelling aspect of prophecy was not taught or practiced within its denomination. However, in Charismatic groups, the power of prophecy enacted in a foretelling manner was abundant. I eventually received instruction and the unction to also do this. I received my own prophetic gifting. I now receive accurate prophetic words from God for myself and for others.

One of the most powerful prophetic words I received for myself from God involved the impossible birth of my baby girl, and her birth happened according to what was revealed to me in the prophetic word. This experience impacted me greatly and largely affected my family and friends. My mother, for example, renounced her lifelong belief in Buddha and accepted Jesus Christ as her Savior after witnessing the prophetic miracle of my baby. There is power and authenticity that comes with Holy Spirit-inspired

prophetic words. Using Paul's words, prophecies reveal the secrets of a person's heart, and these people will bow down proclaiming, "God is really among you" (1 Cor. 14:25).

In the Ministry Focus chapter, two aspects of prophecy are outlined as I learned them from LCM and the Charismatic groups: forthtelling and foretelling prophecy. The practice of forthtelling prophecy in the LCM helped me build a habit of reading the Word of God and experiencing the transforming power of the Scriptures through meditation. The foretelling component of prophecy aided me in discerning my calling in life and it brought transformation to life situations that were otherwise powerless to change. This foretelling type of prophecy also brought me comfort in the darkest time of my life.

In the Biblical Foundations chapter, I present to readers that Paul never meant to belittle the gifts of speaking in tongues during his discourse on prophesying in the context of 1 Corinthians 13–14. One of the major themes in the book of 1 Corinthians is to love others and avoid causing others who are weak in conscience to stumble. While the application of this verse pertains to eating meat, it also applies to whether we should speak in tongues in congregational meetings. Paul was not against speaking in tongues, but he preferred that someone refrain from doing so if it were to cause other believers to stumble. If people speak in tongues, they should be interpreted. In this case, these tongues would become prophecies that are able to build up others. It is important to note that Paul told the believers not to forbid speaking in tongues. Paul's burden for building up the congregation of believers through prophecy is further investigated through word studies in the Biblical Foundations chapter.

In the Historical Foundations chapter, John Nelson Darby is used to connect both the LCM and charismatic churches in my discussion on the charismatic gifts and the

pursuit of holiness. Darby had a significant impact on the LCM regarding the pursuit of holiness and efforts of abandoning the way of the world to be closer to Christ. Facts about him which are lesser known are also discussed in this chapter. The Plymouth Brethren movement led by Darby exhibited sparks of Pentecostal outpourings through evidential manifestations of speaking in tongues, healings, and prophecies as practiced in Edward Irving's church. Unfortunately, Darby's cessationist viewpoint contributed to the disappearing of this early Pentecostal fire. Irving's personal errors also contributed to its disappearing.

In the Theological Foundations chapter, I share theological perspectives from charismatic doctrine to demonstrate that prophets and prophecy still exist today. I have listed modern-day prophets and their stories to support the proposal that the prophetic gifts are genuine, and that God supports their use in modern church congregations. In many Evangelical churches including LCM churches, foretelling prophecy is often mislabeled and misunderstood. My own breakthroughs involving the practice of foretelling prophecy have enabled me to hear God's voice better and encourage and build up others more accurately. This project is written in such a way that the following hypothesis is supported and defended: if believers in the LCM and other Evangelical churches are taught how to hear God's voice using the biblical training and doctrine used in Charismatic congregations then these believers will be better equipped to hear God's voice and increase in their ability to prophesy in a foretelling manner. This includes the ability to foretell prophesy.

The Theoretical Foundations chapter discusses the concept of unlearning, which is often used in the fields of psychology and education. It is essential to unlearn

antiquated concepts that block one from learning new things, especially biblical concepts of truth. Paul had to unlearn his paradigm of what it meant to serve God. To serve God is not to persecute Christians. Peter had to unlearn his paradigm that believing Gentiles were unclean. Both Paul and Peter experienced visions and prophetic encounters that turned their lives upside down. Prophetic words are one of the greatest vehicles to help someone unlearn outdated or errant concepts. My personal testimony to the efficacy and validity of foretelling prophecy is the birth of this project. The papers serve as support for the labor and delivery of my hypothesis that every believer, after proper biblical training and practice, can hear God and foretell prophesy for the edification of the body of Christ.

### **Methodology**

This project was carried out based on a qualitative research model. The subjects comprise seven individuals, four of whom are former LCM members; one current LCM member; one member from another Chinese Evangelical church; and another member of our own home Bible study who was saved among us. The one member from our group had no prior interactions with Evangelical or Charismatic teachings. The small number of research subjects did not afford me the opportunity to use a quantitative model effectively, but it worked great to combine ethnography and narrative approaches.<sup>1</sup>

According to Creswell,

Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to

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<sup>1</sup> John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (London, UK: Sage Publications, 2018), 42, Kindle.

general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data.<sup>2</sup>

Creswell outlines five basic approaches for qualitative studies. These include narrative research, phenomenological research, grounded theory research, ethnographic research, and case study research. These approaches may be combined to form a qualitative study. The focus for narrative research is to “explore the life an individual.” For phenomenological research, researchers aim to “understand the essence of the experience,” while for grounded theory research, the researcher strives to “develop a theory grounded in data from the field.” The essence of ethnographic research is “to describe and interpret a culture-sharing group” and case study research works to “develop an in-depth description and analysis of a case or multiple cases.”<sup>3</sup>

This project does not involve much phenomenological research or grounded theory research methods. It mainly employs narrative research and ethnographic research methods, and to a certain extent, case study research. According to Creswell, researchers using narrative research collect stories of individuals about their lived experiences.<sup>4</sup> This project was carried out during six weeks of training modules. Although this is not conducive to collecting research to write a narrative, I have personally known the participants for many years and, therefore, have narratives on their lives that predate the formal testing of this project. I may not have an entire narrative of their lives, but I do have substantial prior knowledge. This former knowledge was integrated with other

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<sup>2</sup> John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2018), 4, Kindle.

<sup>3</sup> Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 67.

<sup>4</sup> Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 68.

information on my subjects from the questionnaires, group discussions, and interviews carried out in the six weeks of formal training.

Regarding the subjects, it is important to note that all of them are Chinese immigrants from China who now currently reside in the United States of America. Among these subjects, most of them were saved in the LCM denomination which added an extra element to the aspect of a culture-sharing group. These common experiences may serve as a catalyst for other Christians of LCM churches to receive training on how to prophesy according to the model explained and employed in Charismatic circles. Another culture-sharing group experience is that most Chinese Evangelical Christians like my participants hold common misconceptions about the gift of prophecy. The subjects' collective experiences and their transformation may help Chinese Evangelical Christians like themselves to recognize the need and power of the prophetic gifts.

In my research, I used interviews, surveys, and group discussions to accompany the teaching on six different topics related to prophesying in the modern church context. The same list of questions in the pre and post surveys were sent to the subjects prior and following the six weeks of training in order to collect relevant changes after the training. For those who were not able to join the six weeks of training, the recordings were sent to them for listening, and a follow-up interview was performed with each person. Interviews were recorded via Zoom.

One person had not met regularly with our home Bible group throughout the years, so he did not receive many of the similar teachings and exercises I taught on during those groups. He is currently an LCM member and only became acquainted with me through sporadic participation in my virtual online study programs. He was not able



to join the entire training in person. One other participant could not show up to the last meeting, so the recording was also sent to him along with an interview that was carried out after he listened to the recordings. He is a new believer, and data on him reveals that the training he received was new to him. Two other former LCM members could not join the training in-person, so I sent the recordings to them in an online video format. Interviews with them were carried out afterward. All three participants who joined the study offline were still required to fill out the pre and post surveys.

The six topics were (1) The Baptism of the Holy Spirit: How It Enables Believers to Hear God and Equips Believers to Prophecy; (2) The Gifts of the Holy Spirit: The Gift of Prophecy Explained Part 1: Forthtelling; (3) The Gifts of the Holy Spirit: The Gift of Prophecy Explained Part 2: Foretelling; (4) The Benefits and Importance of Prophesying and Building A Prophetic Community; (5) The Common Ways God Speaks; and (6) How to Prophecy and Activation of Hearing and Speaking Forth. Each teaching session lasted fifty minutes in length. Based on participant responses, these teachings largely helped to untangle common misconceptions, demystify debatable topics in Scripture, and offer a clearer understanding of the prophetic gifts and their purposes.

## **Implementation**

### *Identifying the Participants*

The implementation of this project involves a strategy of combining different denominational subjects. All subjects are the constituents of my home Bible group, which

I have led for over seven years. Participant 1 is identified in this project as Portia.<sup>5</sup> She was saved in the LCM in 2003 and stayed active in the LCM denomination for twelve years afterward. She testified to being shaped spiritually by LCM teachings. She also testified to experiencing many miraculous things prior to testing, including getting baptized in the Holy Spirit and having a miracle baby after ten years of infertility.

Participants 2 (John) and 3 (Carol) were also saved in the LCM in 2009. This married couple was not heavily involved with the LCM church for years, but they were also shaped spiritually by LCM teachings. Unlike Portia who spent a lot of time participating in and observing the PSRP model and prophesying meetings in LCM churches, John and Carol did not participate in these vigorous trainings and practices in LCM settings. Participant 4 (Joy) was also saved in an LCM church in 2013 and stayed a congregant there for several years afterward. She became a member of our home group when we were both still in the LCM denomination. She started to become interested in participating in Spirit-filled gatherings after I was introduced to Pentecostalism and shared my experiences with her.

Participants 1, 2, 3, and 4 all eventually left the LCM on their own initiative. Participant 5 (Ben) is currently a member of an LCM church. We became acquainted when he found my teachings online and connected with me via WeChat. He was interested in learning more about the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues, but he could not join us consistently due to opposition he faces at home for his participation in these teachings. Participant 6 (Laura) was saved in a Chinese Evangelical church outside of the LCM. Although she was invited to join LCM meetings by Christian

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<sup>5</sup> All participants in this project are identified by pseudonyms to protect their identity.

friends in the LCM, she never officially became a part of the LCM denomination. One of her reasons for this is because many Chinese Evangelical churches hold negative views toward LCM churches based on the history of Chinese Christianity. Her church was also very against Pentecostal and Charismatic churches and their teachings.

Laura never learned about prophesying nor the LCM's PSRP model prior to this research. She only started to learn about topics such as the baptism of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, prophesying (both foretelling and forthtelling) after she started to join my Bible study regularly. Participant 7 (Tom) is a Christian brother who gave his life to Christ in our Bible study. He never participated in any Christian meetings outside of ours, but he was familiar with the teaching topics from my former teaching within the home group. These seven participants represent a unique expression of a larger group of people. They all have obtained a degree in higher education equal to or greater than a master's degree; maintain a stable job in the USA; and are all immigrants from China. As mentioned, while they share some common characteristics, their spiritual backgrounds differ which made for diversified data collection.

### *Project Timeline*

The project was carried out in six weeks, starting on April 18, 2021. The participants and researcher met online once a week. The training and group discussion were recorded each week. Four members were consistent in joining the online classes each week. Three members were not able to join us physically, but they completed interviews after listening to the recordings. Due to these changes, I added an additional

two weeks to finish all interviews. The project was still completed within the time frame projected and allotted.

### *Week One*

The topic of the first week revolved around the baptism of the Holy Spirit and how it enables believers to hear God and prophesy. Since most participants expressed experiencing feelings of shame for speaking in tongues loudly, they admitted to only speaking tongues inaudibly during their private prayer time. I shared that receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit is not always an automatic experience following one's conversion to Christ. We must pursue this gift and experience, and this is sometimes referred to as a second blessing. Misconceptions limit Christians from receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Some Chinese Churches teach that Christians are baptized in the Holy Spirit once and for all when receiving Christ because the Holy Spirit fell on the disciples at Pentecost.

The concept of receiving an evil spirit when asking for the baptism of the Holy Spirit also widely circulates among Chinese Evangelical churches and is even used to intimidate believers into not pursuing such a baptism. I shared my experience of being enlightened by Luke 11. If we ask for a fish from our earthly father, he will not give us a snake (Luke 11:11); if we ask for an egg, he will not give us a scorpion (Luke 11:12). Snakes and scorpions are types of evil spirits. Jesus says in verse 13, "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" The Bible clearly tells us that if we ask our heavenly Father, He will surely give us the Holy Spirit. Jesus stated, "For

everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened” (Luke 11:10).

During this week of conversation, I also shared that having manifestations is not the determining factor for whether one has received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Our faith must arise to experience the breakthrough in both receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues. Our discussions around common misconceptions were lively. Participants understood that receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit is crucial to activating the gift of prophecy. This is based on Scripture that believers started to prophesy and speak in tongues after they were baptized in the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:6). I encouraged all members to be hungry for and to seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit so they could hear God’s voice better and become activated in a prophetic gifting.

### *Week Two*

In the second meeting, all participants prayed with me to receive the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues. We proceeded to discuss the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and this is where I explained forthtelling prophecy. This practice employed in LCM churches teaches believers to meditate on the Word of God, and then use Scripture to edify the congregation publicly with what they learned. I shared different examples of forthtelling prophecy with the participants, and we discussed the benefits of this kind of prophecy. It is true that this kind of prophecy can help believers to a certain extent, but this kind of encouragement is not the same as a personally applicable, *rhema* word from the Spirit of God for a particular situation.

John shared an interesting insight using an illustration of a western medicine model versus Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). Many Chinese people use both methods to solve their medical needs. While they may visit a western hospital to solve an average medical problem, they will likely and often resort to TCM if and when a certain disease has no standard for treatment in western medical protocol. Herbs and acupuncture of TCM are known for solving difficult medical cases that western medicine cannot solve.

John explained there is a standard way to speak the general Word of God to believers to help them to grow in life. However, this way is helpless when it comes to special cases or individual problems. Foretelling prophecy, rather, utilizes a different way of receiving personal inspiration and supernatural revelation from God including through dreams, visions, healings, and words of knowledge. Foretelling prophecy is more like TCM. John proposed we should learn both ways of prophecy and combine these two forms to help believers become transformed by the written Word of God and through personal encounters with Him, including receiving *rhema* words.

### *Week Three*

Week three curriculum included a more in-depth conversation on foretelling prophecy. I briefly shared a timeline of the recovery of the gifts throughout church history, including conversation about the Latter Rain Movement and the Kansas City prophetic movement. We also discussed Edward Irving and Darby's negative attitude toward the gifts of the Holy Spirit. I specifically shared my own experience of learning how to operate in a prophetic gift of foretelling prophecy.

During our group discussion, we focused on conversing about the positive and negative impacts of prophetic words. Many churches close their doors to prophecy because of issues caused by immature prophetic people. While recognizing the potential negative impacts related to the prophetic gift and its improper use, John still praised the value of a prophetic gift. He expressed that although the risk for negative impact is high, it should not become an excuse for dismissing the gift of prophecy altogether. This participant also testified to having his own prophetic experience where God spoke to his wife through a dream about staying in their physical location pre-Covid.

Joy also acknowledged the positive impacts of this kind of prophecy, especially after hearing my testimony of our miracle baby. However, she became dismayed after not seeing the fulfillment of a prophetic word given to her regarding a future husband. She concluded that she should put her faith in God alone instead of someone's prophecy. Laura encouraged Joy that just because she has not seen the fulfillment of a prophecy does not mean it was wrong. Laura came from an Evangelical church where prophetic gifts were often misunderstood and discouraged. Upon hearing our testimony, Laura became encouraged and open to the gift of prophecy.

#### *Week Four*

In week four, we discussed the importance of building a prophetic community. We discussed the longings of humanity to connect with God in today's postmodern society, and how prophecy is a doorway to this. There is necessity for building a prophetic community where everyone can prophesy especially because when they prophesy, they reveal the secrets of people's hearts and God can be made known among

them (1 Cor. 14: 25). I shared with group about a missionary and American prophet named Ron Sawka. He leads a ministry called *Arise 5* in Japan. He led and trained a group of Japanese believers to prophesy, and together these Japanese believers run a prophetic coffee shop where Japanese persons can come to drink coffee and receive a prophetic word from believers who work there. Many Japanese people have been touched by their efforts.<sup>6</sup>

Prophetic evangelism is a highly effective tool to preach the gospel. To create a prophetic community and utilize this great tool, we must train and teach more people to prophesy and become part of a prophetic community. Dan McCollam, co-founder of Bethel School of the Prophets writes in his book, *Prophetic Company*, “A prophetic company is a people who believe everyone can prophesy.”<sup>7</sup> It is not only one or two prophets who can prophesy; everyone can indeed prophesy. McCollam testifies to witnessing many healings and miracles through the power of prophecy.<sup>8</sup> Many Chinese people are longing to have encounters with God and being a prophetic person is an effective way to bridge the gap to connect people with God in a very short time.

### *Week Five*

During week five, we discussed the common ways God speaks. God speaks in many ways. God obviously speaks to us through Scripture and the prophets. Scripture is a

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<sup>6</sup> Arise Tokyo Christ Church, *About YOGEN CAFÉ*, accessed November 6, 2021, <https://yogencafe.com/about-yogen-cafe/>.

<sup>7</sup> Dan McCollam, *Prophetic Company, The Joyful Journey Toward Building Prophetic Community* (Vacaville, CA: Sounds of Nations, 2016), 64–65, Kindle.

<sup>8</sup> McCollam, *Prophetic Company*, 43.



compilation including what God spoke to some prophets in the Old Testament and some apostles in the New Testament. There are prophets such as Judas and Silas (Acts 15:32) and Agabus (Acts 11:28) in the New Testament as well. When receiving dreams and visions, one may receive a revelation from God or be deceived by Satan. Even in receiving a revelation from God, one may still make errors in interpreting and applying the revelation.

I shared a personal example of how I wrongly interpreted a prophetic dream from God. Thankfully, God led me to the correct path through more dreams, prophetic words, inner speaking, and through my environment. Through this personal story, I showed the participants the necessity of balancing the recognition of the inner voice of the Holy Spirit, the leading of God through our environment, the speaking from people around us, and prophetic dreams and prophetic words from others. After I shared my testimony, group members shared their experiences with hearing God. Tom had limited experiences with hearing God, but he expressed that he is sometimes touched by reading the Bible or hearing others share biblical insights. He also stated he feels God speaking to him through his wife to be more patient with his children.

Laura, has been going through chemotherapy and experiencing a very difficult season. The Lord spoke to her one day through the Bible app that opened automatically to Psalm 18 on her phone when she restarted it after the battery died. Verses 18 and 19 state, “He reached down from on high, he took me; he drew me out of mighty waters. He brought me out into a broad place; he delivered me because he delighted in me.” Verse 33 reads, “He made my feet like the feet of a deer and set me secure on the heights.” She felt God promised her that she will have a bright future. After joining our Bible study and

hearing the testimonies about dreams and visions, Laura started to have more prophetic dreams. Even during her treatment, she had a powerful prophetic dream. Although these occurrences happened before Laura partook in this project, her experiences with such things increased after being introduced to material and training on the prophetic and hearing God's voice.

Joy shared how God spoke to her through an internal feeling at her job. She had a coworker who did not receive a high salary. One day she noticed that her coworker was wearing summer shoes in cold weather. She felt God speaking to her to buy her coworker shoes. When she did, the coworker was very thankful. Joy later found out that her coworker spoke in tongues and was secretly attending a Chinese Pentecostal church for conferences and special events. This coworker received the baptism of the Holy Spirit there and introduced Joy to this church. Joy joined that church on Sunday and met the Korean prophet who prophesied to her about a future marriage.

### *Week Six*

The teaching for week six consisted of practical tools for prophesying and hearing God. One way to activate this gift is by praying a prayer of faith. The Bible states, "for everyone who asks receives" (Luke 11:10). Whether one desires to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit as evidenced by speaking in tongues or some other manifestation, or activation in the prophetic gifting, simply asking the Father to give it to us can be enough. This was the foundation of our activation session.

Another foundation for moving in the prophetic is love. I quoted from Psalm 139 to illustrate my point. David mentions that the number of thoughts God had for him

outnumbered the grains of sand. God is our heavenly Father. Like any father on earth, He thinks of His children more than the children think of Him. Our heavenly Father is deeply in love with every one of His children. It is no wonder His thoughts toward them outnumber the sand. Being prophetic is like gaining access to some of that sand (thoughts of the love of God toward a certain person). God surely loves to share of his vast thought collection with you to encourage His other children. Based on these two principles, I had our group pray that the Holy Spirit would activate the prophetic gifts in everyone. Then, we started to prophesy to each other.

First, the whole group prophesied to Laura. During prayer, John received a picture in his mind of a Japanese Shishi–Odoshi fountain. Water fills the hole of a bamboo stick and the bamboo sticks tips over when full, pouring out into the garden (Figure 1 below). Joy also received an image of a lady in a garden with a big willow tree. The tree was full of falling green leaves. She heard the words, “You have suffered a lot, but you will be okay.” Although Laura did not fully understand the implications of these words, she said she felt comforted. I stepped in to give an interpretation of fountain picture. I felt it meant that her trial will be over soon and she will experience a turnaround in her life, just as the bamboo stick fills up and turns over to dispose of the water. This interpretation proved accurate until at least the timing of this writing. Laura’s doctor told her that recent tests do not show any cancer. Even when some nodules were found in her lungs, the doctor reaffirmed after more testing that she is fine.



Figure 1. Shishi–Odoshi Fountain

Next, the group prophesied to Joy. Laura started to prophesy to Joy by saying she saw a swing hanging on a big tree. Golden sunshine hit the swing and Joy, like a baby girl, swung on the swing. A man stood behind pushing her, and it appeared to be the Lord. Laura continued by sharing a message from Jesus:

Daughter, I know everything you've done. You should not blame yourself or look down on yourself. You should not condemn yourself or lock yourself up. With me, you will always be happy as a child. I will protect you on this swing. You need to be free, and you will be free.

After Laura finished, I tried to ask Joy what she thought about these words, but she could not stop herself from sobbing uncontrollably. When she was able to speak, Joy confirmed that she has been condemning herself a lot recently and this word touched her heart.

John also shared an image he received of a lady with a wedding gown. I explained that this may be a confirmation that Joy will indeed eventually get married. Joy, although sad that this has not happened yet, confirmed that she believed these words were from the Lord because she also had a dream about it. In the dream, she saw a letter with the words written, “You will get married.” Both John and Laura (the ones that prophesied to Joy) were saved in denominations that did not afford them experiences in prophesying before I introduced the prophetic gifts and teachings to them. They are simple and genuine persons, and during this project they were able to hear from the Holy Spirit and share their prophecies.

When we prophesied to John, Joy saw the word, “humble.” She said that God loves John for being a humble man. She also saw a picture in her mind of John standing before many students to teach. John replied that the revelation of ‘humble’ is correct, but Joy’s interpretation was off. John confessed that the Lord has been dealing with him about hidden pride, so he believed the word meant that God wants him to continue to remain humble.

Laura saw John standing on the top of a mountain with a tree nearby. Someone led John to this place under the tree on the mountain top and showed him the view in front of him. That person asked John to look outward like Abraham did. He was encouraged to step out as far as he could and John would be given whatever he could see or his feet touched, just as God did with Abraham. From time to time, John feels very stressed in his job because he handles a lot of money every day. I encouraged him that the Lord is training him and may ask him to handle more money in the future to finance or manage the finances of the Kingdom that God has prepared. John confirmed that he was

encouraged by God's calling and training in his life, and he felt honored about serving God in a greater way in the future.

Ben and Tom were not present during this meeting, so I had the group prophesy over them, and their responses are recorded in the interviews that followed. John shared a picture of a man climbing on a mountain, but he was only halfway up and struggling to reach the top. Joy saw an ocean and within the ocean there was a rope to provide guidance to persons. Laura saw a beach with sunshine gleaming down and a small figure of a man. Although the participants did not have an interpretation of the pictures, I shared that I believed God was revealing that both participants are struggling in their lives, but God is offering help and hope.

After the meeting, I interviewed participants Ben and Tom. I was surprised to find out that they were both very much touched by these prophecies. Tom said that he was the man who climbed halfway up the mountain. He came from a rural area in China and was trying to advance in his work. Sometimes, however, he was not confident in himself and could not overcome hindrances. Although he has made some progress, he did not clearly know where he was going. The third picture with the sunshine on the beach offered him great hope. He was encouraged knowing that God is leading him even though he does not always feel His presence.

Ben was touched by the second picture of the man in the ocean and the guiding rope. He told me it spoke exactly to him. He said he wants to love the Lord, but he often feels his flesh pulling him toward the world. He likened the world to the sea. That is, he often feels lost at sea. The rope represents the hope he is looking for. He felt hope rise in his heart through this prophetic imagery.

## **Summary of Learning**

### *Survey Results*

Seven pre and post surveys were sent and returned completed. There was a total of twelve questions. The first seven questions were open ended. The first one asked about each participant's denominational background. Questions two through four addressed their understanding and experience in hearing God before and after the training. Questions five through seven inquired about the subjects' understanding and experience with prophesying before and after the training.

The second half of questions (eight through twelve) were based on a scale of 0 to 4 with regard as to how a participant feels they hear from God. Question eight, for example, was written as: "Using a scale where 0 = never; 1 = rarely; 2 = occasionally; 3 = regularly; 4 = all the time, please rate the following question by your experience: I have heard God speak to me in a mystical way (dream, vision, thoughts, voice, etc.)." In the presurvey, 71.4% of the people said that they rarely heard God speak to them in a mystical way. The remaining 28.6% of the participants occasionally heard God speak to them in this way (Figure 2).

Using a scale where 0 = never; 1 = rarely; 2 = occasionally; 3 = regularly; 4 = all the time, please rate the following questions by your experience: I have ...mystical way (dream, vision, thoughts, voice, etc.)  
7 responses

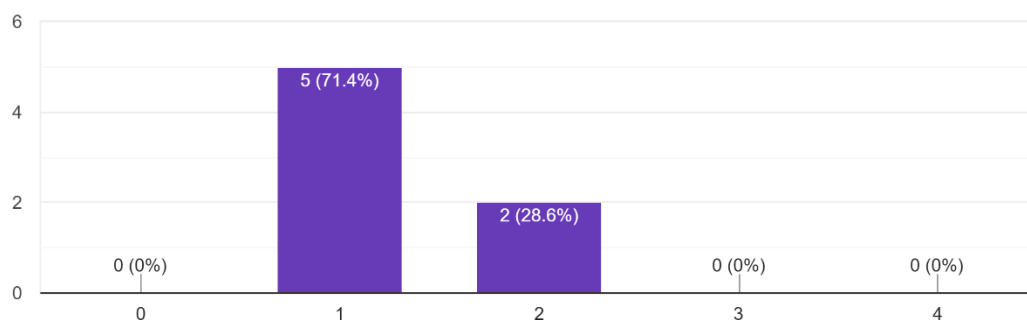


Figure 2: Pre-exposure to God Speaking Mystically

In the postsurvey, those who answered to rarely having heard God speak to them this way declined from 71.4% to 14.3%. Those who occasionally heard God in this manner increased from 28.6% to 71.4%. This data alone demonstrates that the training and group practice worked to increase the participants' ability and confidence to hear from God via dreams, visions, thoughts, and voices, etc. See Figure 3 below.



Using a scale where 0 = never; 1 = rarely; 2 = occasionally; 3 = regularly; 4 = all the time, please rate the following questions by your experience: I have ...mystical way (dream, vision, thoughts, voice, etc.)  
7 responses

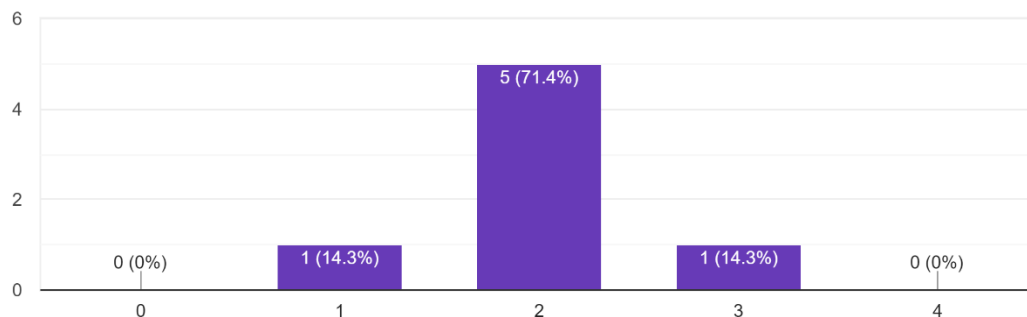


Figure 3: Post-exposure to God Speaking Mystically

Question nine asked, “Using a scale where 0 = never; 1 = rarely; 2 = occasionally; 3 = regularly; 4 = all the time, please rate the following question by your experience: I have had a revelation where suddenly I knew something was going to happen and it did.” In the presurvey, 42.9% of participants said they never experienced this. Another 42.9% of the group responded that they rarely experienced this. Only 14.3% indicated that they occasionally had such an experience (Figure 4).

Using a scale where 0 = never; 1 = rarely; 2 = occasionally; 3 = regularly; 4 = all the time, please rate the following questions by your experience: I have... I knew something was going to happen and it did.

7 responses

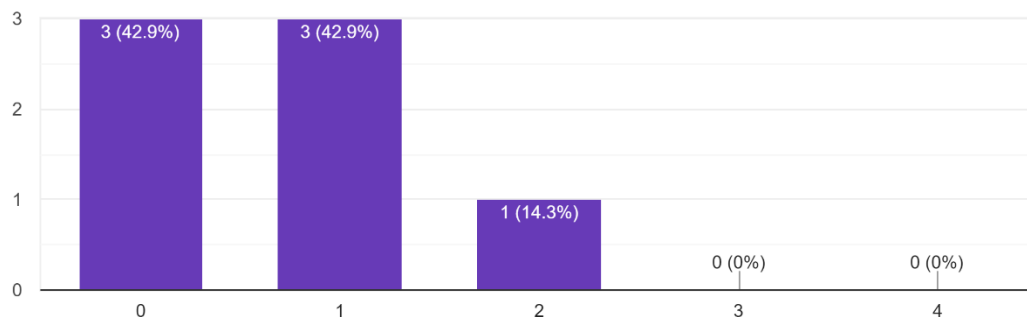


Figure 4: Pre-test Experience Receiving Foreknowledge of Events

In the postsurvey, those who claimed to have never experienced knowing something was going to happen before it did, dropped down from 42.9% to 28.6%. Those who said they had rarely experienced this declined from 42.9% to 14.3%. Those who claimed that they occasionally had this experience grew from 14.3% to 42.9%. See Figure 5 below.

Using a scale where 0 = never; 1 = rarely; 2 = occasionally; 3 = regularly; 4 = all the time, please rate the following questions by your experience: I have... I knew something was going to happen and it did.  
7 responses

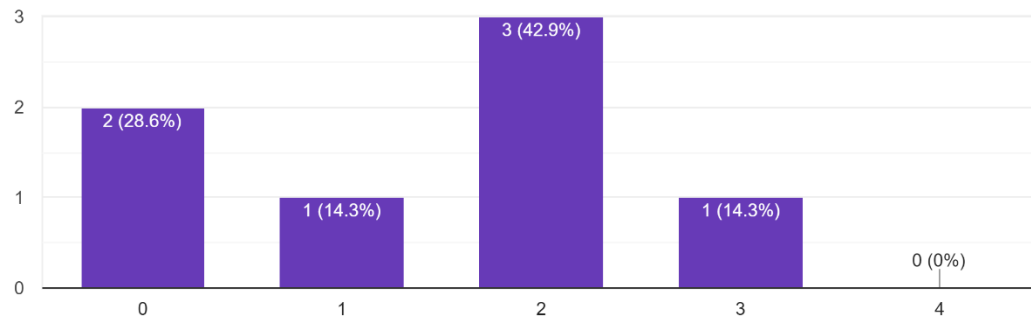


Figure 5: Post-test Experience Receiving Foreknowledge of Events

Question 10 stated, “Using a scale where 0 = never; 1 = rarely; 2 = occasionally; 3 = regularly; 4 = all the time, please rate the following question by your experience: I believe God speaks to people in ways that they know what will happen in the future.” In the presurvey, 85.7% said they believed God occasionally speaks to people in such ways regarding the future. Only 14.3% believed God speaks this way to people regularly (Figure 6). In the postsurvey, those who believed God occasionally speaks in futuristic ways decreased from 85.7% to 28.6%. Those who believed God regularly speaks this way increased from 14.3% to 57.1% (Figure 7).

Using a scale where 0 = never; 1 = rarely; 2 = occasionally; 3 = regularly; 4 = all the time, please rate the following questions by your experience: I belie...ays that they know what will happen in the future.

7 responses

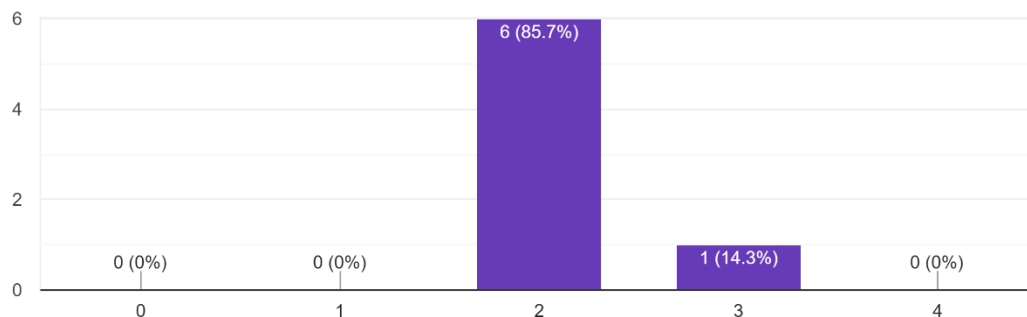


Figure 6: Pre-test Belief in God Revealing Future Events

Using a scale where 0 = never; 1 = rarely; 2 = occasionally; 3 = regularly; 4 = all the time, please rate the following questions by your experience: I belie...ays that they know what will happen in the future.

7 responses

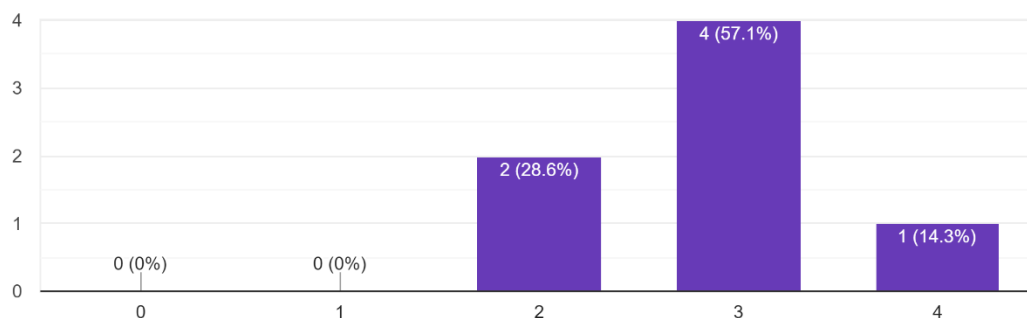


Figure 7: Post-test Belief in God Revealing Future Events

Question 11 asked the participants, “Using a scale where 0 = Strongly disagree; 1 = Disagree; 2 = Somewhat Agree; 3 = Agree; 4 = Strongly Agree, please rate the following question by your experience: I believe if I can hear God speaking to me more clearly, it will help me grow closer to God.” In the presurvey, 14.3% of the people

somewhat agreed that hearing God's voice will help them grow closer to God. About half of the participants (57.1%) agreed that hearing God's voice will help their relationship with God. The remaining 28.6% of the group strongly agreed to this statement (Figure 8).

Using a scale where 0 = Strongly disagree; 1 = Disagree; 2 = Somewhat Agree; 3 = Agree; 4 = Strongly Agree, please rate the following question...e more clearly, it will help me grow closer to God.  
7 responses

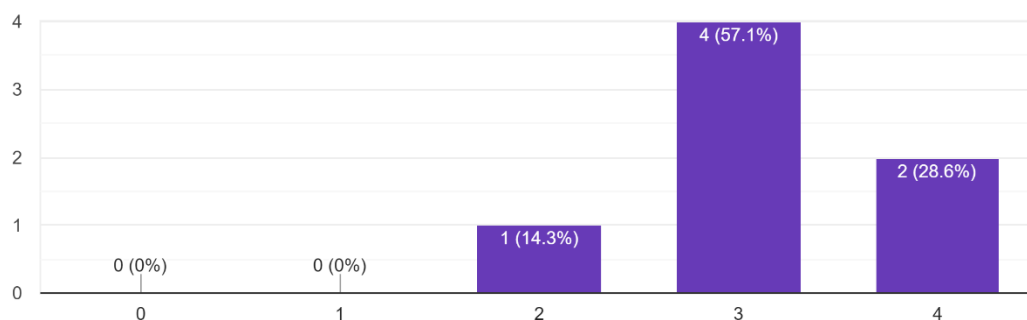


Figure 8: Pre-test Belief that Hearing God Increases Proximity to God

In the postsurvey, those who somewhat agreed with this statement decreased from 14.3% to 0%. That is, this person became convinced that growing in their ability to hear God would allow them to grow closer to Him. Those who agreed with this viewpoint originally decreased from 57.1% to 14.3%, and those who strongly agreed with this statement in the beginning increased from 28.6% to 85.7%. These numbers demonstrate a drastic change in the subjects' viewpoints on hearing God's voice and thus affecting their ability to get closer to God. See Figure 9 below.

Using a scale where 0 = Strongly disagree; 1 = Disagree; 2 = Somewhat Agree; 3 = Agree; 4 = Strongly Agree, please rate the following question...e more clearly, it will help me grow closer to God.  
7 responses

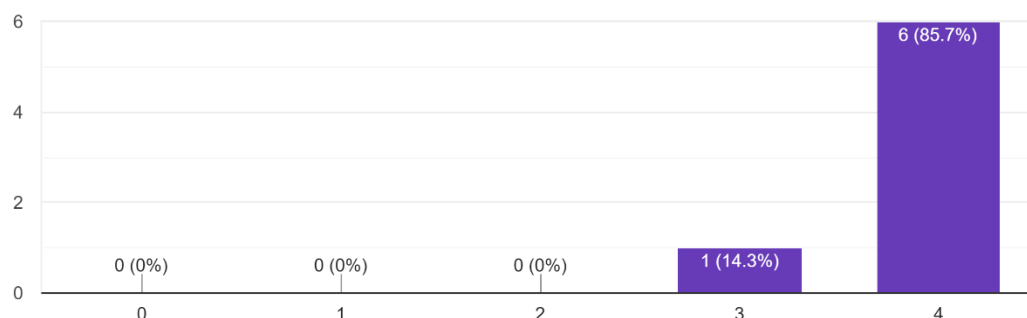


Figure 9: Post-test Belief that Hearing God Increases Proximity to God

The final question asked, “Using a scale where 0 = Strongly disagree; 1 = Disagree; 2 = Somewhat Agree; 3 = Agree; 4 = Strongly Agree, please rate the following question by your experience: I believe if I can hear God speaking to me more clearly, it will help me to foretell prophesy.” The presurvey results show that 28.6% of the participants somewhat agreed that hearing God’s voice would help them to foretell prophesy. About half, 42.9%, of the group agreed with this statement while 28.6% of them strongly agreed with this statement (Figure 10).

Using a scale where 0 = Strongly disagree; 1 = Disagree; 2 = Somewhat Agree; 3 = Agree; 4 = Strongly Agree, please rate the following questions b... more clearly, it will help me to foretell prophesy.  
7 responses

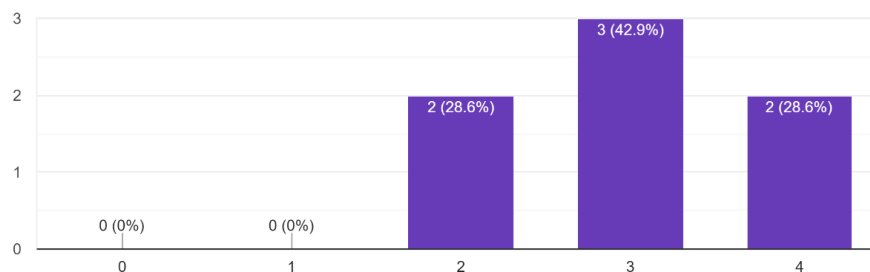


Figure 10: Pre-test Belief that Hearing God Increases Ability to Prophecy

In the postsurvey, those who indicated that they somewhat agreed to this statement decreased from 28.6% to 0%. Those who agreed declined from 42.9% to 14.3% and those who strongly agreed drastically increased from 28.6% to 85.7%. These results demonstrate that subjects' attitudes changed toward prophecy after this training (Figure 11). They now believe that hearing God's voice will cause them to prophecy.

Using a scale where 0 = Strongly disagree; 1 = Disagree; 2 = Somewhat Agree; 3 = Agree; 4 = Strongly Agree, please rate the following questions b... more clearly, it will help me to foretell prophesy.  
7 responses

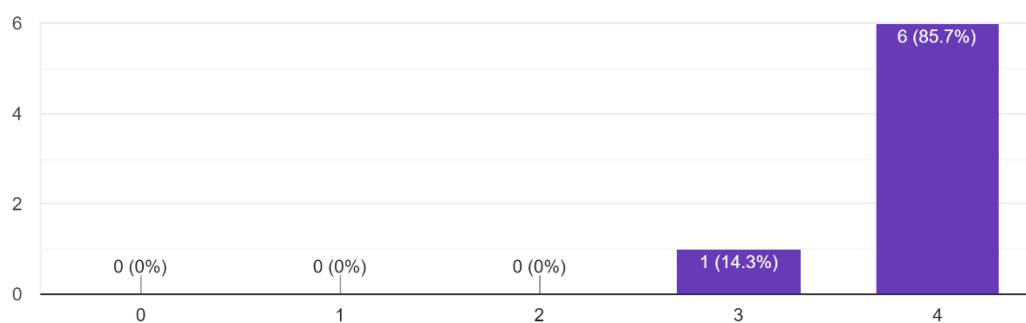


Figure 11: Post-test Belief that Hearing God Increases Ability to Prophecy

*Receiving the Baptism of the Holy Spirit*

By the end of the project, all participants testified to having received a baptism of the Holy Spirit. Participant 1, Portia, already had a dramatic experience of receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit prior to testing. In a dream, she spoke with the pastor of a Charismatic church she attended. He approached her and asked if she wanted to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. She agreed and he laid hands on her. She started to tremble and shake uncontrollably in the dream and thus received a powerful baptism of the Holy Spirit. She testified that from that time on, she no longer doubted she had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. She also testified to speaking in tongues although she did not practice this gift often.

John and Carol also received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. John recalled feeling the weight of God's presence in the atmosphere around him. Carol felt tingling in her face when the presence of the Holy Spirit was present. Joy had also already received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but she admitted that she did not speak in tongues often. Laura testified to receiving the Holy Spirit and practicing speaking in tongues earnestly. When she is unsure of how to pray about the difficulties she is facing, she now fervently prays in tongues and believes that this practice helps increase her faith. She thanked me for introducing this gift to her.

Tom said he felt something when I prayed for him to receive the Holy Spirit, but he did not have any physical manifestation. He admitted to feeling shy about speaking in tongues among the louder voices of others. Ben listened very carefully to the recordings. Although he was somewhat familiar with these teachings, he had never experienced any changes in his personal life due to them. However, this time (in our testing) he received a



breakthrough in his faith and understanding which resulted in receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He also started practicing praying in tongues on his drive to work.

### *Increase in the Gifts of the Holy Spirit*

Portia said that prior to testing, she was able to discern people's motives even if they hide their true intentions. She explained this to be more of intuition or feeling in her consciousness. After participation in this project, she experienced an increase in her ability to discern spirits. She now feels when something is wrong or if there is an evil presence around. Carol and Laura testified to an increase in prophetic dreams and understanding of these dreams. Their ability to interpret prophetic dreams increased. All subjects testified to speaking in tongues after the training, though they do not practice on a regular basis.

### *Hearing God through Dreams*

Some participants saw an increase in their ability to hear from God including in more ways than they have experienced before. Before the training, Portia only heard God during times of reading the Bible, prayer, or through an inner witness of the Holy Spirit. After the training, she testified to hearing from God sometimes through dreams. In her pre-interview, Carol said she used to have prophetic dreams about heaven, but she did not realize they were prophetic dreams. God already often spoke to her through prophetic dreams, and she saw an increase in these prophetic dreams after exposure to my teachings and testimonies on prophesy and the heavens.

Both John and Carol testified that one of my prophetic dreams about them greatly encouraged and comforted them. Laura testified that she never had prophetic dreams before joining our group. She now often has prophetic dreams. Although Portia struggles with receiving restful sleep at night, she testifies to having some prophetic dreams after the training and or exposure to the prophetic teachings. Joy was so encouraged by my teachings on prophetic gifts in past years, she started meeting with a prophetic teacher and pastor regularly to discuss her dreams and receive spiritual guidance from this pastor. This pastor has helped Joy to grow in spiritual maturity and her prophetic gift. Tom testified that he still has not had any prophetic dreams. Ben also said he is not a dreamer yet.

#### *Increase in Understanding Prophecy*

Collectively, the group testified to gaining a better understanding of the prophetic gifts, and my teachings helped them demystify harmful concepts and prejudices against the prophetic gifts. Portia used to think that prophets are not legitimate prophets as in the days of the Old Testament, and that this is not a practice for today's church congregation. Now, her view has changed. She acknowledges that God still speaks through prophets today and that not all prophets are false. She was particularly impressed with a lady named Lily who has a prophetic gift. Lily prophesied to Portia right after she found herself pregnant.

Portia also shared another story during her interview in which she experienced the power of real prophecy among some prophetic people associated with the ministry of Mahesh Chavda. Laura changed from someone who knew nothing about the prophetic to

a promoter of the prophetic gifts. She still maintains good relationships with friends in her Evangelical churches, but she often argues with them that the prophetic gift is to encourage and build up others and is not of evil spirits. Although they disagree, she maintains her belief in the biblical rightness of prophecy.

Tom did not understand the prophetic gift at all before the training because he was a new believer in Christ. He misunderstood the prophetic to be something like soothsaying which is a widespread practice in Chinese culture. He expressed in his interview that after the last teaching session, he has begun to understand that prophecy is for encouraging and building others up in love. Ben expressed that he believes LCM churches and believers need to experience the power of true prophetic words and would benefit from having subjective encounters with God.

### *Activated to Prophecy*

All participants demonstrated willingness to become activated in prophesying, and an increase in their ability to hear from God and prophesy to others after the training. Their prophecies had huge impacts on the receiving parties. This is demonstrated by the results of the last section of the training. However, one common characteristic among the group is that they did not deliberately seek opportunities to prophesy to others, especially strangers. They limited their use of this gift due to shyness or a lack of confidence in using it. Nevertheless, the concept that “everyone can prophesy and build up others” is substantiated by their participation and accuracy in the prophetic exercises we did together. I believe the participants can become bolder in exercising this gift.

*Increase in Closeness to the Lord*

All participants testified to a closer walk with Jesus and greater intimacy with God after the completion of the project. They claimed their spiritual lives have matured. The interview question aimed to delineate whether prophetic gifts helped them grow closer to God or if pursuing the gifts of the Holy Spirit carried them farther away from their focus on the Lord. Portia said she became closer to God because she felt more of the realness of God through hearing Him. Laura testified to being greatly encouraged by hearing the prophetic encounter my wife and I experienced with our baby girl. She also expressed an increase in comfort and courage because she was now able to hear God more through her own personal encounters. She now often spends time meditating on the Word of God and worshiping in the way she learned from leaders in Charismatic churches. In these moments, she feels the presence of the Holy Spirit.

John and Carol both testified to now reading the Bible together every day and becoming more open to prophetic dreams from God. They felt they got closer to God and live more as Spirit-led believers in their jobs and church. Joy also said she gained maturity after receiving these teachings, even though she was sometimes disappointed. Tom said he would be willing to learn more about the Bible and prophetic gifts. He felt his growth was limited, but he desires to learn more. Ben felt he received a lot of help through the teachings, especially because they are not available in LCM churches. Learning about the prophetic gifts caused him to feel that God is more real in his life. He expressed that only studying the Bible felt like reading a textbook. He longed for subjective experiences with God, and he now testifies to having had more subjective

encounters with God since participating in this project. This is evidence of growing closer to God.

### **Conclusion**

The project was a success by way of attendance. Everyone involved was very willing to cooperate, and I thank God for them. Even though I had a small number of participants, they represented the denominations I hoped to affect with this project. This qualitative study employed focus groups, surveys, and interviews for data collection purposes. My pre and post surveys presented questions with limited answer choices. In the future, I would include broader questions and answers to gain more data collection on my participants. This would allow me to track more of the participants' attitude changes in other areas. I would also pursue enlisting a larger number of participants and enlisting more current LCM church members to join the project.

The original intention of this paper was to bring together the prophetic practices of both the LCM and the Charismatic congregations to form a more holistic biblical model of prophecy. That is, to combine Paul's teaching on prophecy with the PSRP model used in LCM churches. However, in order to be accurate in my testing and results, I narrowed this project to specifically measure how people from Evangelical churches can grow in their ability to hear God and foretell prophesy if they were trained according to the model available in Pentecostal and Charismatic congregations or groups. Therefore, this project did not include any comparisons with the PSRP model.

Overall, the interviews and surveys demonstrate that my participants could hear from God better after the training, and they demonstrated an ability to prophesy. My

hypothesis is substantiated by the evidence. Spirit-filled believers can prophesy if taught to hear God accurately. This project will continue to live on in the ministry that I do through my home Bible study. I believe that LCM churches and congregants will one day be open to the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and I hope this project could play a role in that awakening.

**APPENDIX A**  
**PRE-SURVEY QUESTIONS**

1. Please describe your denominational background.
2. Please describe your experience(s) with being taught how to hear God's voice.
3. Please describe what you believe God's Word says about hearing God's voice.
4. Please describe your personal experience(s) with hearing God. In what ways and how often?
5. Please describe your experience(s) with being taught how to prophesy.
6. Please describe what you believe God's Word says about prophesying.
7. Please describe your personal experience(s) with prophesying. In what ways and how often?
8. Using a scale where 0 = never; 1 = rarely; 2 = occasionally; 3 = regularly; 4 = all the time, please rate the following question by your experience: I have heard God speak to me in a mystical way (dream, vision, thoughts, voice, etc.)  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Using a scale where 0 = never; 1 = rarely; 2 = occasionally; 3 = regularly; 4 = all the time, please rate the following question by your experience: I have had a revelation where suddenly I knew something was going to happen and it did.  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Using a scale where 0 = never; 1 = rarely; 2 = occasionally; 3 = regularly; 4 = all the time, please rate the following question by your experience: I believe God speaks to people in ways that they know what will happen in the future.  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. Using a scale where 0 = Strongly disagree; 1 = Disagree; 2 = Somewhat Agree; 3 = Agree; 4 = Strongly Agree, please rate the following question by



your experience: I believe if I can hear God speaking to me more clearly, it will help me grow closer to God. \_\_\_\_\_

12. Using a scale where 0 = Strongly disagree; 1 = Disagree; 2 = Somewhat Agree; 3 = Agree; 4 = Strongly Agree, please rate the following question by your experience: I believe if I can hear God speaking to me more clearly, it will help me to foretell prophesy. \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX B**  
POST-SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Please describe your experience(s) with being taught how to hear God's voice.
2. Please describe what you believe God's Word says about hearing God's voice.
3. Please describe your personal experience(s) with hearing God. In what ways and how often?
4. Please describe your experience(s) with being taught how to prophesy.
5. Please describe what you believe God's Word says about prophesying.
6. Please describe your personal experience(s) with prophesying. In what ways and how often?
7. Using a scale where 0 = never; 1 = rarely; 2 = occasionally; 3 = regularly; 4 = all the time, please rate the following question by your experience: I have heard God speak to me in a mystical way (dream, vision, thoughts, voice, etc.)  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Using a scale where 0 = never; 1 = rarely; 2 = occasionally; 3 = regularly; 4 = all the time, please rate the following question by your experience: I have had a revelation where suddenly I knew something was going to happen and it did.  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Using a scale where 0 = never; 1 = rarely; 2 = occasionally; 3 = regularly; 4 = all the time, please rate the following question by your experience: I believe God speaks to people in ways that they know what will happen in the future.  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Using a scale where 0 = Strongly disagree; 1 = Disagree; 2 = Somewhat Agree; 3 = Agree; 4 = Strongly Agree, please rate the following question by your

experience: I believe if I can hear God speaking to me more clearly, it will help me grow closer to God. \_\_\_\_\_

11. Using a scale where 0 = Strongly disagree; 1 = Disagree; 2 = Somewhat Agree; 3 = Agree; 4 = Strongly Agree, please rate the following question by your experience: I believe if I can hear God speaking to me more clearly, it will help me to foretell prophesy. \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX C**  
**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Please describe overall your experiences in hearing God's voice before the training.
2. Please describe any improvement in hearing God's voice after the training.
3. Of your past experiences of methods involving hearing God's voice, which of those methods were most effective? Which of those methods were least effective?
4. What did you believe the voice of God sounded like? Were there any accompanying signs that you observed and or took notice of as you were hearing God speak to you then versus now?
5. Did the Lord provide you with any manifested or tangible confirmations that He not only spoke to you, but that the words and things He spoke to you were real and actual for you?
6. Please describe your experiences in hearing God's 'still, small voice' (internal hearing).
7. Please describe your experiences in hearing God's voice through Scripture.
8. Please describe your experiences in hearing God's voice through others (external) including through a pastor, preacher, stranger, or friends and family member(s).
9. Please describe your experiences in hearing God's voice through personal prophetic words given by others, or through your own dreams and visions?
10. Please describe your experiences in hearing God's voice through nature, an environment, or other circumstance(s) in your life?

11. Please describe if and how you believe this training has matured you as a follower of Christ. For example, has the Lord convicted you of any sin or wrongdoing that allowed you to become a more devoted follower of Christ?
12. Please describe your experiences and relationship with the Lord and how close and intimate you were with the Lord before the training.
13. Please describe your experiences and current relationship with the Lord and how close and intimate you are with the Lord now (after the training).

**APPENDIX D**  
**GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**



1. What new information did you learn from this week's teaching?
2. Do you have a new perspective regarding this topic? How has it changed?
3. Please describe any things you believe you wrongly or rightly believed before or after this teaching.
4. How will you implement any new information you gained?

**APPENDIX E**  
**PROJECT CALENDAR**

Date	Item Description	Location / Participants
2021		
June 13	The Baptism of the Holy Spirit: How It Enables Believers to Hear God and Equips Believers to Prophesy	Online
June 20	The Gifts of the Holy Spirit: The Gift of Prophecy Explained Part 1 Forthtelling	Online
June 27	The Gifts of the Holy Spirit: The Gift of Prophecy Explained Part 2 Foretelling	Online
July 4	The Benefits and Importance of Prophesying and Building A Prophetic Community	Online
July 11	The Common Ways God Speaks	Online
July 18	How to Prophesy + Activation of Hearing and Speaking Forth	Online

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